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Rendered services: An ethnographic observational study on the participation of student assistants in the provision of a small college library’s public services

Cochran, Richard Michael, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University, 1989
RENDERED SERVICES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONAL STUDY ON THE
PARTICIPATION OF STUDENT ASSISTANTS IN THE PROVISION OF
A SMALL COLLEGE LIBRARY'S PUBLIC SERVICES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By


* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1989

Dissertation Committee: Approved by
Dr. Elsie J. Alberty
Dr. Robert R. Bargar
Dr. Judith L. Green

Adviser
College of Education
To Jennifer,
who never stopped
helping me through
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the trust and cooperation extended to me by the student assistants who made this dissertation possible. Through this study I came to know them in significant ways which shall enrich the remainder of my professional career.

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making them spirited and memorable intellectual events.

Finally, I acknowledge the outcome that the decision to pursue another academic degree never anticipated—meeting and marrying my beloved wife, Jennifer Peskind Cochran. No happier result of a scholarly endeavor is possible.
VITA

May 13, 1951 .......... Born - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

1970 - 1978 .......... Administrative Specialist
United States Army

1974 ...................... B.A., University of Maryland

1978 ...................... M.Ed., Boston University

1979 ...................... M.S.L.S., Wayne State University

1979-1983 ........ Assistant University Archivist, University of Notre Dame

1983-1985 ........ Reference and Bibliographic Instruction Librarian
Muskingum College, New Concord, Ohio

1985-1987 ........ Director of the Library
Muskingum College
New Concord, Ohio

1987-1988 ........ Assistant Director
Courtright Memorial Library, Otterbein College
Westerville, Ohio

1988-present ........ Director
Courtright Memorial Library, Otterbein College
Westerville, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Higher Education Research
Academic Library Administration
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

American college and university libraries depend heavily upon the contribution of student assistants to achieve mandated objectives of access and service to their surrounding academic communities. The magnitude of this contribution in this decade may be seen in data collected by the U.S. Office of Education from 3,104 academic institutions, where in a single year, 1982, student workers provided over 40 million hours of assistance in those institutions' libraries (Bowker, 1984, p. 396).

Generations of college and university librarians have debated the value of student worker assistance. This debate is manifested in the professional literature spanning most of this century. A thorough literature review, however, reveals that for all the attention student assistants have received, little notice has been given to the actual behavior of student assistants in the context of their environment.
The omission of this focus is not surprising. Library research literature has been characterized as having a tendency for being "far removed from the reality of librarianship" (Natoli, 1976, p. 3). This failure to account for "actual" behaviors has been paralleled in other professional literatures as well. In preparation for his classic ethnographic study of an elementary school principal, Wolcott (1972, p. 177) discovered that much of the literature dealing with school administration was "hortatory or normative in content" telling principals "how they ought to act," rather than how other principals really do act. A professional literature with these limitations fails to show what really happens, or, as Wolcott points out, "how the ideals are translated into real behavior."

If they have not devoted themselves to observation, librarians are nonetheless exceptionally conscious of enumeration. Collection size, circulation figures, size of staff, seating spaces, building square footage and especially budgetary resources and expenditures are of great interest to library administrators. While one may pluck the appropriate statistics pertaining to student assistants out of this plethora of data, such information has limited utility. Like Wolcott (1972) who discovered census data offers only very marginal
information about elementary school principals, the bare fact that student library assistants worked forty million hours in a year does not provide insight into how one becomes a student assistant, how a student assistant acts, what is satisfying, or what is perplexing.

ENCOUNTERING THE PUBLIC

Student assistants employed in college and university libraries have traditionally received many assignments, from janitor to messenger, from typist to book mender (63 diverse duties are listed by Fisher, 1953, pp. 66-69) This study was interested in a narrower range: student assistants performing public service duties.

Public Services

Public services include the most vital areas in which the library accomplishes its tasks. Public services include reference work, readers' advising, and library use instruction, to name a few. These functions are not generally assigned to student assistants. Instead, students normally staff circulation and information desks and counters, participating in a variety of face-to-face exchanges with library users.
Student Assistants and Service Encounters

Student assistants at library circulation desks encountering the public engage in a repertoire of activities which, broadly speaking, have commonalities across many service settings. Czepiel and his associates (1985, p. 4-7) have described several characteristics of the service encounter. These seem particularly relevant to the understanding the nature of student assistants' contributions:

1. Service encounters are purposeful, goal oriented human interactions.

2. Service providers are not altruistic, a service encounter is work.

3. Prior acquaintance between service provider and client is not necessary to complete a service transaction.

4. Service encounters are limited in scope and restricted by the nature and content of the service to be delivered.

5. Task-related information exchange dominates the exchange in terms of importance.

6. Client and provider roles are well defined. A basic set of rules gives structure to interchanges.

7. A temporary status differential occurs in the course of a service transactions wherein there is a temporary suspension of social status.

This model provides a structure for a preliminary examination of the exchanges between student assistants and the public. Its theoretical underpinnings lie in
Social interaction theory which views human society in a special way.

Social Interaction: A Theory of Social Reality

One theory of social reality, social interaction, is based on the notion of a social structure generated by and composed of a patterned interaction of individuals. This theory assumes several conditions (Parsons, 1968, p. 434):

1. A set of "units" which interact with each other.

2. A set of rules or other "code" factors, the terms of which structure both the orientations of the units and the interaction itself.

3. An ordered or patterned system or process of the interaction itself.

4. An environment in which the system operates and with which systematic interchanges take place.

This is an attractive theoretical approach for undertaking an exploration of student assistants in an academic library for several reasons. In the first place, it considers the interaction which occurs. The central feature of the service encounter between student assistant and library patron is interaction.

Secondly, few institutional settings are so charged with an atmosphere of rule-guided behaviors as is a library. Anticipated silence is everywhere apparent;
rules concerning book circulation, charges and fines are overwhelmingly manifest. An appropriate theory for the study of student assistants in the library environment should take into consideration this element of rules.

The third piece of social interaction theory concerns the presence of patterned activity. At a nominal level, patterns such as circulation periods, work shifts, and library hours are acknowledged, if not fully comprehended, by participants in the library environment. More subtle patterns were anticipated, and were revealed in the course of this study.

Finally, the fourth component of social interaction theory deals with the environment itself. The college library is a distinctive environment in which there is an endless interplay of patrons, personnel and resources in support of, and in direct relation to, broader institutional purposes, for example, academic endeavors.

This study employed the foregoing general tenets of social interaction theory as an organizing and structuring device, a lens to look upon the world, if you will. In adopting this theoretical approach certain assumptions were made in developing a research agenda. Those assumptions will be discussed in a moment. First, a discussion concerning the research questions this study posed.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study grew from a desire to better comprehend one dimension of the library setting which has a considerable professional impact on academic librarianship. The general inquiry had as its genesis the global question "What is the nature of student assistant provision of services to the public at a small college library's circulation desk?" Anticipated to be a qualitative research study, it was aimed, in Patton's words, to "understand and document the day-to-day reality of the setting...to unravel what is actually happening...in a search for major patterns and important nuances" (1980, pp. 61-62).

To adequately focus attention on the key elements of the main research interest, three major questions with several sub-parts emerged through the course of this study. They arose, as is usually the case in qualitative research, out of reflection on the problem, after consideration of an extensive review of the professional library literature, and from contact with data as it was being collected:

1. What is the nature of the service environment of the library within which student assistant activities are embedded? This question was divided into four parts:
1.1. What are the observed and reported public service encounters in which student assistants participate?

1.2. In what manner are public service encounters defined and understood? This sub-question was divided into two parts:

1.2.1. How are these encounters defined and understood by the library users who initiate them?

1.2.2. How are these encounters defined and understood by the student assistants who respond to them?

1.3. What is the pattern of services provided by student assistants over time?

1.4. What is routine and what is extraordinary among the activities in which student assistants participate?

2. What is the nature of the social structure of the public service activities in which student assistants are involved? That is, what are the normative requirements for
conduct in this setting which influence the provision of service by student assistants?

2.1. What are the normative requirements for acting and behaving as a student assistant? This sub-question was considered from two perspectives:

2.1.1. How are these normative requirements perceived from the viewpoint of the student assistant?

2.1.2. How are these normative requirements perceived from the viewpoint of the library user?

2.2. What are the normative requirements for acting and behaving as an initiator of a service encounter (library user)? This sub-question was also considered from two perspectives:

2.2.1. How are these normative requirements perceived from the viewpoint of the student assistant?

2.2.2. How are these normative requirements perceived
from the viewpoint of the library user?

3. What is the nature of those factors external to the immediate service setting (the circulation counter) which impact upon the provision of public services by library student assistants? This question was divided into two parts:

3.1. What limiting factors are inherent in the library itself?

3.1.1. What part do resources play in limiting the provision of public services?

3.1.2. What part do library rules and regulations play in limiting the provision of public services?

3.2. What larger institutional (e.g., college) factors affect the provision of services?

ASSUMPTIONS

From the outset, it was understood that viewing the phenomenon of student assistants in an academic library setting with a social interaction perspective involved
several assumptions.

Assumptions Concerning the Library Environment

A basic assumption about the library environment at the point of service to the public is that it is dynamic, and is governed by what Goodenough has termed "a system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting" (1971, p. 41). It was also assumed that observation over time of the natural setting in which library public services are provided would yield a variety of important insights, including a valid taxonomy of service demands made of student assistants and their responses to those demands.

It was assumed that interviews with participants in library service activities would yield data representative of participants' perceptions of that environment. Further, those perceptions would be mediated by a number of personal, social and institutional factors.

Finally, it was assumed, on the basis of personal observation and the testimony of participants in this setting, that service activities which occur at a small college library's circulation desk occur in at least the same amount of diversity and frequency during evening
hours as daylight hours.

Multiple Sources of Data

The theoretical framework upon which this study is based acknowledges a complex, interactive structure. To faithfully capture that complexity, multiple sources of data are necessary. Similarly, appropriate analytical techniques are also needed.

Three major sources of data were accumulated during the course of this study; mechanically recorded observational data (videotapes), transcripts from open-ended interview data, and an assortment of documentary materials. A discussion concerning data collection, with considerations of advantages and limitations of each of these sources, will be found in chapter three, below.

Multiple Points of Analysis

The multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon under study required that the accumulated pool of data be entered and reentered again and again in such a way that the questions posed here would receive adequate treatment. For example, one aspect of this study centered on the temporal nature of activities in which the student assistants were involved. Analysis of the
accumulated data therefore centered on time as a focus of analysis. Other foci of data analysis included repertoire of activities, rules, and normative behaviors. Often the same data were viewed again and again to tease out important relationships.

LIMITATIONS

This researcher acknowledges that the study presented here has certain limitations. It is limited in that it has a selected focus, that is, this study is concerned with service encounters in which student assistants and library users interact. This study recognizes student assistants in this setting do other things but they have been set aside here.

This study accepts the limitations on generalizability which this single-site and qualitative research design imposes. Within those parameters, however, the length of time spent in observation, the number of behaviors observed, and the analytical procedures used to generate findings all serve to create a reliable record of the underlying culture of the service encounter between student assistants and library users.

Lastly, from the beginning, the researcher accepted the potential limitations of this study posed by the
fact that the researcher was also a participant in the setting under observation. In reality, the study benefited from this through both eased and frequent access to the setting. Further, the insider-outsider perspective allowed for the development of trusting relationships among those who were observed which often resulted in the discovery of important, if sometimes jarring, insights.

While limitations are acknowledged, this study employed methods of triangulation and measures to insure data reliability. As such, this study offers others who care to investigate similar subjects and settings a way to frame and contrast their own observations.

THE PLAN OF THIS STUDY

This chapter presented the basic thrust of the interests, scope, and limitations posed by this research. The remainder of this study is arranged as follows. A review of the relevant professional and research literature investigated during the course of this study is given in Chapter II.

The research design and methodology which produced the data for this study will be found in Chapter III.

Chapter IV contains the main analysis of the findings of this study which have been decontextualized
in order to make them visible.

Finally, Chapter V discusses the implications of this study in terms of the nature and study of culture, the study of institutional settings, specific issues related to the study of the library culture, and finally, student assistants as a studied population.

Appendices and a bibliography conclude this study.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review is divided into two major sections. The first seeks to acknowledge previous efforts to assess student library assistants as participants in the affairs of academic libraries. This review of the professional library literature is intended to provide not only a foil against which this study may be juxtaposed, but also an organizing framework for future researchers of this subject.

The second part of this review posits this study in the milieu of available research approaches and in so doing, considers issues concerning the purpose of this study, the nature of the questions this study seeks to answer, and the matter of data analysis.

Needless to say, this literature review endeavors to establish a legitimacy for the conduct of this study by demonstrating a reasonably novel approach to a familiar phenomenon. And further, it also seeks to indicate that the research literature in which this study is grounded has been prudently synthesized so as
to guide and shape the production of worthwhile findings.

STUDENT ASSISTANTS:

THE PROFESSIONAL VIEW

A comprehensive reading of the professional library literature reveals an attitude toward student assistants, if not unfriendly, then cautiously guarded. It is little wonder, in a profession dominated by unfailing systems of classification, order, and stability, that the most tangential and temporarily employed of workers should receive such treatment.

An adequate review of the professional library literature treating student library assistants must take into account three major components of that literature, namely the professional and managerial treatises, the periodical literature, and the research-based literature. Each shall be covered in their turn below.

Professional/Managerial Treatises

By the turn of this century academic librarians had emerged as a distinct professional group among American librarians thereby creating a demand for professional and managerial treatises. These fall easily into the category of "hortatory or normative works" which Wolcott
(1972) discovered in his search for works about school principals. Such works exude a learned sagaciousness which might be called the conventional wisdom of the profession. One of the first works intended to advise college and university librarians (Wyer, 1911) touched directly on the employment of student assistants:

Subordinate places are often filled by undergraduate students who are used in nearly all college libraries either full or part time...There are differing opinions as to the value of this student help...[but] there is no reason why this form of service may not be made satisfactory for the less technical and scholarly parts of the work. (p. 6)

Later writers expanded on what was to become the conventional wisdom for dealing with student assistants. What themes recur in these works? In the beginning, relatively little was said directly, but the subject has drawn increasingly prominent attention. Among the emerging are:

The Debate Over Employment

Several early treatises openly questioned whether students should even be permitted to work in academic libraries. Works (1927) and Randall and Goodrich (1941, pp. 128-129) represent the most extreme attitudes, holding fast to the belief that student assistants pose a great threat to the reputation of the library in any
context. In the view of the latter authors even though "the details of charging and discharging books" might be attended to by student assistants, "it is a risk to [let them] do so" (pp. 128-129). Works (1927, p. 33) suggested that the attitude of the student assistant at a public service desk may prove to be devastating to the library, especially when persons desiring service are "regarded as annoyances."

Most writers, however, accepted the reality that student assistants were necessary in the emerging employment structure of academic libraries. Although some were cautious, they were generally optimistic in their approach to the subject.

The Value of Library Work Experiences

Some students who found work in college and university libraries discovered a career to their liking and later became professional librarians. In this regard, the employment of students in library service was seen as a means of developing the profession. In the 1930s and the 1940s, however, a flood of student assistants were thrust into the hands of reluctant academic librarians. This new work force came largely as a result of student work study programs arising out of Depression-era New Deal programs. As a result, there
ensued a debate on the nature of library work in the academic context.

Lyle (1944, p. 317), in the first edition of his classic work on which generations of academic librarians have been weaned, posited there were basically two philosophical positions concerning the employment of student assistants in academic libraries. The first is that employing student assistants in library work helps "develop initiative and character," and for this reason, should continue. On the other hand, he reported that some librarians hold that library employment for students actually interferes with the purpose for which students are in college, namely, to receive an academic education.

Lyle's comments may be compared to the analysis offered by Brown (1942, pp. 2-3) when she contended academic librarians believed 1) either student assistants should be assigned duties solely to further the goals and purposes of the library or 2) the library itself is an educational agency and "should endeavor to develop individual capacities of its student assistants."
The Problem of Selection

Once there was an agreed rationale for student employment in college and university libraries, several authors offered limited guidance in creating a viable work force. One of the principal issues concerned the selection of student assistants.

A chorus echoed support for the proposition that students should be hired on the basis of their personal fitness to accomplish their assigned tasks. Some writers were more adamant about this point than others. Brown and Bousfield (1933, p. 56) declared that "students should be selected to work in the library solely because of their ability to do work better than other candidates. Consideration such as aid to needy students and the value of preparing students to enter the library profession, are entirely subordinate."

Wilson and Tauber (1945, p. 248) repeated this sentiment when they wrote "If an effective group of student assistants is to be assembled, it is essential that selection be made solely on the basis of merit than upon the pecuniary needs of students or the intervention of personal friends among administrative officials or faculty members." Wilson and Tauber recommended some form of testing to judge the basis of merit. A quarter of a century later, Rogers and Weber (1971, p. 30)
suggested that "the library will be well advised to establish its own program of testing, not only of typing and shorthand skills, but also clerical aptitude including such a pervasively necessary ability as alphabetization."

In the matter of selection some writers frankly admitted that scholarly aptitude is not an overwhelming qualification upon which student assistants should be chosen. Acknowledging that student assistants play an important part in providing public services (albeit ordinarily at a low level of sophistication), some professional/managerial works cite as desirable personality factors such as having a capacity to conform to established regulations, courtesy, and the ability to work well with others.

**Training and Supervision**

Detailed descriptions of training programs have rarely appeared in professional treatises, but broad principles are frequently elucidated. Wilson and Tauber (1945, p. 248) suggested to maximize the use of student assistants, academic librarians needed to 1) create an atmosphere of close cooperation between student assistants and their supervisors; 2) emphasize the value of their student assistants' work in the greater scheme
of the library's work; 3) demand a high standard of performance from student assistants; and 4) formulate specific objectives for library work by which student assistants shall be guided.

Lyle's guidance was more explicit. "The method of giving...instruction varies," he wrote, "but follows in general some such pattern as follows:" [here he spends a page and a half describing a set of basic steps in the training of library assistants] (Lyle, 1944, p. 326-328).

Several works include the admonition that if students are to be employed, sufficient staff is needed to oversee them. According to Randall and Goodrich (1941, p. 140) "the staff should be adequate to admit the special help which many students [assistants] need and which they will not ask for if there is always a crowd at the desk."

One of the most comprehensive recent works on the management of libraries (Hicks and Tillin, 1977) spends a considerable section discussing personnel management principles and makes several references to lower echelon workers, including student workers. These authors cite a variety of general tenets which library administrators should adopt to get the most from their subordinates. Showing appreciation, directing with clarity, dealing
with fairness, sharing information, promoting initiative, and praising are among the desirable practices Hicks and Tillen report (pp. 85-89).

Summary

The material pertaining to student library assistants in professional and managerial treatises is relevant to this study only insofar as it represents what is, or has become the conventional wisdom in the realm of library administration.

While the principles found here have not been formulated out of research, they are important to note because they represent a wide professional consciousness of what the role of student assistants ought to be.

The next major component of the professional literature I shall discuss, the periodical literature, offers greater opportunity for diversity.

Professional Journals and Periodicals

Any good librarian counseling a researcher will quickly point out that periodical literature usually provides the kind of information about which books are often not written; the scope of periodical articles is usually, not always, manageable enough to be accommodated in the space of a brief paper. Library
periodicals are no different.

Two major bibliographic tools, Connor's Bibliography of Library Economy, covering the years 1876-1920, and Library Literature, 1920-present, ease the task of performing a retrospective search for the periodic literature on many library subjects. Annual cummulations of these series were used as the principal means of locating the periodical literature pertaining to student assistants in college and university libraries.

The coverage of the subject proved somewhat different here than in the treatises just described. Although the periodical literature has frequently served only to reinforce the professional canon borne out in the professional/managerial treatises mentioned above, still, there has been room for the expression of some alternative views over the years. The periodical literature is not so homogeneous in dealing with the subject of student assistants.

Appeals to Common Sense

The earliest articles one finds pertaining to the subject of student assistants are those articles which are basically empirical, making appeals to common sense, and empty of bases of research. Although specific
references to student assistants did not appear until this century, Whitney (1882, p. 136) and Vinton (1882, p. 290) were among the earliest writers to speak to the desirable characteristics of library assistants in general. They both suggested such qualities as industry, attention to detail, and politeness as among the most important. One of the earliest articles on student assistants in academic libraries appeared in 1915 when issues of student employment were discussed including the part-time nature of the work, above-average intelligence of student assistants, possibility of long-term career commitment, etc. (Library Journal, 1915, pp. 367-8).

These speculative articles have continued to appear sporadically over the years. Wannarka (1956) offered eight common sense suggestions on "how to keep your student help" (which included keeping the assistant interested, encouraged, praised). Even Cottam (1970), responding to the widespread disruption on college campuses, offered little more than the "sure fire" advice given by his earlier colleagues. Cottam, saw a solution to the problems of the day by

1. Inviting greater student assistant participation in library administration.

2. Improving staff communications through bulletins and meetings.
3. Integrating students into a more collegial atmosphere.

4. Seeking student assistants' opinions for problem solution.

**Advice Based upon Direct Experience**

A second genre of the periodical literature on student assistants resembles the first, but advice is supported by the experience of the author at his or her home institution.

Dodgen's work (1924) is a good example of this type of literature. She presented a discussion of her experiences in reorganizing a small teacher's college library. Faced with the mammoth task without help, she was able single-handedly to successfully employ an army of 250 students to complete the project. At the conclusion of her article (p. 1023) she offered "whether this could be done in another school I do not know. It grew out of a condition and an emergency here, and we have found it good."

Many later writers employed this single case study approach to offer suggestions on how students were successfully selected, trained, and employed. Those institutions' experiences which were reported included Peoria's Bradley Polytechnic Institute (Guinn, 1925); Hiram College (Smith, 1930 and 1943); Kansas State
College (Camp, 1934), and the University of Texas (Osborne, 1941).

The identical spirit of "this works for us," continued with Martineau (1955) who presented an account of his first year using students at the Goddard College Library in circulation and cataloging. Later, Ford, Harris and King (1957) described the successful employment of student assistants in a freshman orientation program at the Tuskegee Institute.

Such articles have doubtless sparked discussion and exhorted some to action. They were not research by any means, however, and aside from providing thought-provoking reading, limited in their reflections on student assistants.

Research-Based Literature

A third group of articles one finds in the periodical literature, though rarely, are those derived from research or more frequently, quasi-research studies conducted at the master's or doctoral level. In view of the fact that the Bachelor of Library Science degree was for many years the terminal professional degree recognized by the American Library Association, and even now, doctoral programs are not certified by the ALA, it is little wonder that the professional audience
interested in consuming research studies has historically been quite small.

A notable article of this sort was by Helen Brown which summarized her 1942 thesis completed at Columbia (Brown, 1943). Her thesis will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but suffice it to say, this article was markedly different from most of the older literature on student library assistants in that it was a comparative study, based on questionnaire data gathered from several institutions.

Application of Derived Research Models

In the past twenty years, while the literature on student assistants has not grown appreciably, three new trends characterize this "modern" literature. At the same time that common sense advice and single case experience articles continue to appear some authors have sought to connect student assistant issues with wider personnel management and psychological literature. This is approximately what Hicks and Tillin (1977) sought to do in their monograph which was mentioned above.

Kathman and Kathman acknowledged a review of the literature on student assistants "reveals a lack of application of management theory, especially that of organizational behavior" (1978, p. 118). They related
concepts of motivation, employee satisfaction, and goal-directedness to library settings.

On the subject of job satisfaction, at least one study in which nonprofessionals (presumably including student assistants) participated was conducted through a series of questionnaires administered to a sample of Australian academic library workers (Wittingslow and Mitcheson, 1984). Here again, connections were made to a wide body of management theory to help explain and describe the situation.

Another new trend in the literature is the reporting of statistical models to predict and determine staffing levels of student assistants. In general, articles of this type have required data collected from numerous sites in an effort to gain a sample with statistical significance. Renner and Clark (1979) worked with data drawn from the University of Illinois departmental libraries. Using a multiple regression analysis design they sought to develop a predictive mathematical model showing appropriate staffing combinations. They calculated the effect of eight variables (faculty served, instructional units, monograph budget, total acquisition budget, hours open, circulation, volumes, and student hours) on staffing patterns and concluded that circulation was the primary
indicator for determining staff allocation (p. 168).

Scherrei and Corin (1981) presented a description of a funding formula used by twenty-seven units of the UCLA library system. This formula is based on recorded work-load measurements of nine different activities (including shelving, circulation, volumes added to the collection, serial titles maintained, reference activity, etc.).

Neither of the above models contains explanatory components, but are merely a means for decision making based on collected statistics. As such, they provide librarians with no more explanation of the nature of student assistants in academic libraries than, say, the classroom teacher whose formula for assigning grades based on a curve tells that teacher about why students did well or poorly on an examination.

The other area which has received some attention in the recent periodical literature concerns participation of student assistants in reference work. There is a growing literature on the nature of reference work, including psychological aspects of the reference interview, user satisfaction, perceived reference competence on the basis of gender, etc. Some of the recent work in this area touches on the participation of student assistants.
A number of articles have appeared, but four are indicative of how this issue has been approached in the literature. Eyman (1970) described the preliminary steps taken by the library at Central Michigan University to understand the parameters of reference activity in which student assistants participated by means of a detailed survey. The survey recorded the type of questions asked of students and recorded how well students answered them. He concluded that students did a creditable job, well enough that he concluded that other reference desks staffed by students could be opened insofar as many of the questions asked were of a basic, directional nature. He also concluded that professional staffing at reference desks could be reduced and students could take up the hours absented by the professionals. Halldorsson and Murfin (1977) developed a controlled set of questions which was asked of professional and nonprofessional staff members at reference desks in two university libraries. This study showed that nonprofessionals performed significantly less well than professionals, and the reasons were due to deficits in training and experience on the part of the nonprofessionals.

Curtois and Goetsch (1984) conducted a survey of nonprofessional workers providing reference services at
64 college and university libraries in the state of Illinois. They determined the level of educational attainment, length of time employed and number of desk hours staffed by nonprofessionals. Their study showed that the nonprofessional pool included about twenty percent who had some or no college; most of these were likely student assistants in whom we are interested. Unfortunately the study was not detailed enough to reveal specific details about their contributions and activities.

Finally, Murfin and Bunge (1988) are the latest to speak to the issue of the efficacy of reference service provided by professionals and nonprofessionals. Their study of twenty academic libraries was based principally on patron satisfaction questionnaires. Once again, while not purely centered on student assistants in this role, Murfin and Bunge concluded that nonprofessionals were generally less effective than professionals because 1) they were less likely to spend adequate amounts of time with patrons, 2) they were not as successful as professionals when they directed patrons to information, and 3) they were less able to perceive patron satisfaction or dissatisfaction than professional librarians (p. 14).
Omissions

A not altogether unexpected absence from the professional literature are articles by student assistants themselves. In fact, in gathering the material for this literature review, only a single article by a library student assistant was located! Appropriately titled "'No, I'm not a librarian, but may I help you?" the article defended the use of student assistants at library reference desks, based on the author's experience while working at the Central Michigan University library (Goodrich, 1972).

Summary

The subject of library assistants in academic libraries has received a wider treatment in the professional periodical literature than in the treatises first analyzed in this literature review. But, as Wolcott (1974) discovered when he surveyed the literature dealing with school administration, the library literature is similarly limited. To paraphrase Wolcott, that which is gleaned from library literature about student assistants is hortatory or normative in content. It tells how student assistants ought to act. It is prescriptive rather than descriptive. It is also equally obvious that very little in the way of research
or even systematic data collection supports the contentions of the authors mentioned here.

The third portion of this review of the professional literature will focus on the studies of student assistants undertaken in conjunction with higher academic degrees (theses and dissertations).

Theses and Dissertations

The theses and dissertations which have been undertaken to investigate student assistants employed in college and university libraries have generally fallen into two basic types. The first type constitutes attempts to gauge normative personnel practices through widely distributed questionnaires, their findings based on the compilations (sometimes statistically treated) of these data. The other type employs various correlative tests to predict the ideal student assistant, resulting in better selection criteria.

Some theses appear to be little more than an extended literature review. Brown (1954) is nothing more than a long discussion of issues relating to student employees. Her chapters cover the potential of student assistance, selection options, desirable traits, training and supervision, student work versus work by other nonprofessional library personnel, and hours and
This overgrown term paper, lacking focus or direction concludes timidly: "with a carefully considered program the library can receive many benefits from well-selected, properly trained and supervised student assistants" (Brown, 1954, p. 55).

A Search for Patterns

The search for patterns of personnel practices affecting student assistants was begun with Brown (1942) whose study of the college libraries at Barnard, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley sought to "survey actual conditions governing the service of student assistants..." (p. 5).

She sought to discover answers to six questions, namely, what conditions govern appointment, what work is performed, what is the relationship between needed qualifications and special abilities of the student assistants, what factors govern the cost of student assistant’s work, and finally, is substitution of student work by non-student clerical workers practicable.

Brown's data collection consisted of a series of "information slips" distributed to all student assistants in the six college libraries. They amounted
to an open-ended questionnaire which served to generate a collective job description. The rest of her data was gathered from personal interviews with the librarians and/or the supervisors in charge of student work (students were not interviewed).

While she developed a comprehensive list of duties performed by the students, the seventy-four tasks she described are clearly overdrawn. Cutting pages, pasting labels on books, marking new books, plating, and printing labels for books all fall into the category of technical processing.

In general, the results of Brown's thesis seem rather primitive. She found that the conditions under which students were employed were financial— that students were paid either by the college, by special library funds, or by federal funds. The cost of student assistants was likewise (predictably) controlled by rates of pay, merit considerations, and available sources of funding. And the possibility of replacing cheaper student workers with other types of nonprofessional staff workers was generally prohibited by virtue of scarce resources. Finally, student qualifications taken into account by supervisors were positive personality and work traits, skills, experience, health, need, and special talents.
Two State Studies

Brown's basic formula was employed by Fisher (1953) who sought to determine the use of students in the college libraries of North Carolina by ascertaining "similarities and differences in regulations governing the selection, pay, qualifications and duties of student assistants" (p. ii).

Fisher developed what she called a "normative survey questionnaire" to which forty-nine North Carolina college libraries ultimately responded. The findings showed an expected diversity, both in pay (ranging from 42 to 73 cents per hour), in criteria for selection, and in duties.

She also found two commonalities. First, there were more student assistants employed than any other nonprofessional type in North Carolina college libraries. And second, in all libraries surveyed, final selection of student assistant rested with the librarians.

Packard (1953) also mirrored Brown in his survey of the libraries of the teachers colleges in New Jersey. Half of his study, derived from questionnaire responses, is a simple narrative of the student assistant programs at six institutions.

He concluded that recruitment, training, and rates
of pay were uneven at these institutions and were among the most serious issues facing library administrators.

Two National Studies

More modern studies of student assistants have differed only in sample size, but not basic interest. Lyng (1968, p. 2) set out to "survey the current practices and procedures used in selecting the student assistants who work in college and university libraries in the United States."

Lyng limited her study to colleges with enrollments of 500 to 1500 students and ended with a sample of 217 college libraries. Data was collected by means of a checklist covering personnel practices described in the professional literature. Her thesis is essentially an elaboration on the responses found in these questionnaires.

She found that the majority of libraries used nothing more sophisticated than the interview and application form in selecting student assistants. "The librarians," she wrote "did not preclude the use of more formal measures...they simply felt that they got along satisfactorily with the less formal measures" (p. 101).

Interestingly, responses to her questionnaire items regarding selection were compared to the positive
characteristics of student library assistants suggested over thirty five years earlier by Brown and Bousfield (1933), and were shown to correlate significantly.

She conceded the continuity of student assistant personnel practices when she concluded her study "it seems safe to surmise that unless unprecedented growth occurs, or changes in the structure of the schools are made, the libraries will continue to pursue their present courses and obtain the same results" (p. 114).

The finding Lyng made regarding the relatively shallow use of personnel management techniques did not discourage Gaines (1977) from diving into the same waters, to find answers to the same questions. Gaines' dissertation consisted of, once again, an analysis of the results of a direct-mail questionnaire which surveyed the personnel practices of 270 university and four-year college libraries.

Gaines sought to ascertain the use of certain personnel techniques, to wit: use of administrative forms, including job descriptions and job evaluation forms; orientation training; selection procedures, including examination of credentials and qualifications, employment tests and interviews; policies concerning length of work week; and wage policies.
He concluded that relatively light use was made of specific personnel techniques in smaller libraries. With few exceptions, more sophisticated personnel techniques were found to be employed in large university libraries (where, presumably, a large enough library bureaucracy had grown up to implement them!). Though Gaines' dissertation is the most recent one to investigate student library assistant personnel practices, it is not likely to be the last.

Other Theoretical Approaches

The foregoing discussion concerning theses and dissertations centered on one type of study which has become common in the professional literature. The second type of study at this level which was alluded to earlier attempted to find correlations between various psychological test scores and success as a student library assistant.

Psychological Tests

Oberheim (1941) wrote the first academic thesis on a topic related library student assistants. In it she sought to discover which academic grades and what scores on three selected psychological tests predicted success among library assistants.
For the 307 undergraduate student assistants at the Iowa State College library, she defined success as superior ratings of supervisors and whether or not the students were promoted within the library's mobile structure.

Oberheim used the results of three tests: the American Council on Education Psychological Examination, the National Institute of Industrial Clerical Test, and, some students were administered the Bell Adjustment Inventory.

The results of Oberheim's study showed significant correlations between grades and results of the Clerical Test. Interestingly, gender played an important role. Grades were the best overall predictors for successful female assistants. Superior performance on the Clerical Test, on the other hand, was the best overall indicator for male assistants. Overall, for assistants with previous library work experience, the Clerical Test was the best predictor; for students without previous library work experience, grades were the best predictors.

Performance Assessment

Winger (1948) designed his thesis around a study of student workers employed in the circulation department
of the University of Illinois library. He used rating scales and other devices to judge performance and also replicated Oberheim's use of grades and the above test scores.

Winger, however, found that none of these factors provided a significant correlation to superior performance. He concluded "it seems evident that such general measures are inapplicable as selection criteria where the requirements of the job of the student are simple and easily learned as they are for most of the jobs of the group in question" (p. 63).

**Correlations Among Multiple Measures**

Park (1952) also sought to find correlations between certain factors which affect the performance of student assistants. His study was carried out at the University of Texas library and involved 225 student assistants who had been employed in the library over a period of four years (1946-1950).

Park used only the results of the Cooperative English Test and was able to secure both high school and college transcripts, size of high school alma mater, membership in college organizations, major field of study, terminal estimates made by immediate supervisors, number of hours worked, and length of time worked.
Park found significant correlations between quality of performance (as evidenced by supervisors' ratings) and academic rank in high schools, academic rank in the freshman class at the University of Texas, and scores on the Cooperative English Test. For unknown reasons, library researchers in graduate programs have not further pursued the line of investigation of student assistants pioneered by Oberheim, Winger and Park.

Summary

A variety of attempts to reckon with the subject of student assistants is to be found in the professional library literature. This literature has served an important function. It has guided the profession toward an ever-improving, if idealized, view of the student assistant, as their presence has become an indispensable part of academic librarianship. Positive reports of projects in which student assistants have been allowed to participate have provided a inspiration to generations of common-sense librarians. Such testimonials from other professionals have been a beneficial and positive force in the profession.

The body of literature dealing with student assistants, however, represents a rather narrow focus of interest in terms of the ways student assistants can be
investigated. For example, not a single experimental study involving student assistants was located in this extensive review of the literature. Similarly, studies such as this one, seeking to uncover significant cultural meanings and patterns, are absent. These gaps, therefore, provide viable opportunities for learning more about student assistants and the setting in which they operate.

The remainder of this literature review will focus on studies outside the field of professional librarianship which assist in making a new approach to the study of student assistants possible.

A NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF STUDENT ASSISTANTS

The great majority of those who have studied and written about aspects of student assistants in college and university libraries have done so while paying little or no attention to the social world within which libraries exist. Libraries are clearly more than just buildings housing collections of books. Individually and collectively, libraries possess cultural identities, fixed not only in the minds of public at large, but in the minds of those who operate them as well.
The cultural elements of libraries include concrete objects: books, study tables, and service areas. The culture of libraries also includes expectations and stereotypes brought to the setting by participants: scowling, old-maid librarians; finger-to-the-lip shushing of loud talk; quiet, meditative study places. In fact, what one expects largely colors what one experiences in a library. An interviewed student in this study, Julie, paid this researcher a compliment, but revealed much about what she expected the library to be like:

I think the library assistants really like it (working in the library). And for reasons that, that professional librarians like it, that I wouldn't, or that isn't appealing enough to me, because, because, you just have to be so quiet (laughs)...I think you're probably the exception, though, because you always talk to people who come in and you greet them and make them feel like "Welcome to my library, here, and this is fun!" And you ask them how they are. And that always surprises me--it's such an uncharacteristic librarian thing to do. And I love it!

Julie may have appreciated the personal touch of a single librarian, but particularly so because, on account of her experience and her acquired notions of what libraries and librarians are about, she expected far less.

Libraries are special places because they are both viewed specially and satisfy special human
requirements. They may have similarities with other cultural institutions, but are not interchangeable with them. Similarly, library assistants are not interchangeable with other types of workers; their position in academic library settings mark them as special actors, operating in a special environment, performing particular kinds of duties peculiar to the environment of which they are a part.

In the framework of social interaction theory, the nature of student assistants' participation in this environment is distinctly revealed is through consideration of the interaction between participants in the setting, and in the pattern of activity in which these participants are engaged. Previous studies have not done this. Student assistants in academic libraries have not been seen as agents or actors or participants in an ongoing social enterprise, but rather as occupiers of niches in a basically routine library setting.

Studies in a variety of other fields, however, have revealed that a complex and dynamic flow of meaning and interpretation underlies even the most ordinary of everyday activities. As this study discovered, the outwardly sedate setting of a small college library has many unseen elements and currents.
One enamored of exotic and far-away places may very well disdain the intensive investigation of a routine setting in an everyday life situation. But Spradley (1980) whose vision has been a source of inspiration throughout this study, shows that setting out not to simply study people but to learn from them is a principal goal of an ethnographic approach to research. Further, he amplifies the role of modern social science research by exhorting all who undertake such studies to do so with an implicit desire to improve the human environment.

Detailed elements of Spradley's theoretical and methodological approaches to ethnographic research appear below, and in relevant portions of Chapter III. His greatest appeal, however, resides in the efficacy of his research protocol (his "Developmental Research Sequence") to reveal the salient aspects of human culture.

Studies in Other Professions

This study considers the library as a culture, and specifically, student assistants within that cultural milieu. It joins a growing number of studies conducted to discern certain aspects of everyday cultural behavior in organizational/professional fields. This approach,
for example, has been used in the medical profession to investigate the social form and ceremonial order of the doctor-patient relationship (Strong, 1979). It has been used in law enforcement to discover the "manners and customs of an American police department" (Van Maanan, 1982). And, this approach has been increasingly used to investigate classroom processes in education. Erickson (1986) provides a deft overview of the emerging dimensions of research conducted on teaching.

Systematic Observation

Whatever the focus and context, this new wave of inquiry into what has hitherto been regarded as ordinary depends on the systematic accumulation and analysis of large quantities of field data. Among those data sources, observation has been lauded by many social scientists as a means of revealing patterns of everyday human activities which are ordinarily ignored or unseen.

In their support of observation as a research approach, Guba and Lincoln (1981, pp. 191-202) reflect on several good reasons for using observational techniques. Observational techniques build on direct experience, one of the most powerful tests of truth that people employ in everyday life. This feature of observational research recommends it to one of the
severest critics (Natoli, 1976) of the (yet) prevailing quantitative orientation for researching library subjects who insists that such an approach cannot "take into account the diverse nature of librarianship itself..." (1976, p. 3).

In addition to building on direct experience, systematic observation provides a means of precise measurement of time and duration of events. More importantly, in contrast to questionnaires and interviews which may or may not elicit accurate information, direct observation records what people actually do. Further, as Light (1979, p. 60) points out, through direct observation of a setting the categories of behavior "emerge from what is actually happening rather than from artificial, preconceived notions".

Previous research concerning student library assistants has resulted, as I have previously shown, in fairly complex typologies of work activities. These typologies have been derived from questionnaire data and, to a lesser extent, from reviews of the professional literature. Inquiry, however, has not been directed into their "actual" lives.

Wolcott, as he launched into his now classic study of an elementary school principal, recognized a similar
dearth of observational studies in his field. "The apparent neglect of attention to the actual behavior of school administrators in the literature on educational administration," he later wrote, "led to the proposal for conducting this research."

Most researchers who adopt observational methodologies in their studies, or recommend them to others (Burgess, 1984, p. 78; Evertson and Green, 1986; Spradley, 1980, p. 53), are quick to point out that the exact nature of this observation is determined largely, if not exclusively, by the questions the research is investigating. As one writer put it: "It is not possible to observe everything. The human observer is not a movie camera, and even a movie camera has to be pointed in the right direction to capture what is happening. Moreover, a movie camera has a limited field of vision, taking in only those activities that can be seen within that field accessible to it. For both the human observer and the camera there must be focus." (Patton, 1980, p. 137) Later on in this chapter I shall return to Patton's notions of observation.
Special Issues Concerning Systematic Observation

As this study developed over the course of time, certain issues concerning the manner in which observation came to be employed required further grounding in the literature. Some were methodological, some philosophical. In any event, in this section I shall deal with those conspicuous issues which are particularly noteworthy for this study.

Observation versus Participant Observation

Observation as a research strategy has been widely employed in the social sciences and some authors have acknowledged a continuum whereon purposeful observation tactics lie. On one end is "pure" participant observation where, as Bogdan and Taylor describe it, there is "a period of intense social interaction between researcher and subject in the milieu of the latter" (p. 5). On the other end is nonparticipation. Spradley (1980, p. 59) concedes "It is entirely possible to collect data by observation alone. Sometimes this kind of research is undertaken by [one] who would like to conduct ethnographic fieldwork but wants to avoid involvement. Sometimes a particular social situation does not allow for any participation, but still holds
possibilities for research."

The range of observational involvements has been succinctly described by Guba and Lincoln (1981) who provide an insightful typology of participant observation mediated by situation, subject awareness, and by participation/nonparticipation on the part of the observer.

Clearly not all observational studies can meet the strict definition of Bogdan and Taylor mentioned above, for "going native" does not necessarily provide one with any greater capabilities to understand a human context than one who carefully and systematically records that activity from afar. Certainly the nature of the research undertaken affects the manner in which participation can occur. Lamenting this fact, Khleif reminds us "in the school, and especially in the classroom, the fieldworker cannot be a participant; he neither has the role of teacher or pupil, nor can he take part in classroom interaction" (1974, p. 391). This is certainly not to say that a researcher cannot gain insight into what goes on, but it does set that researcher apart from the observed.

Another issue pertaining to the degree of participation in observation relates to the normal role of the researcher in the setting. Bogdan and Biklen do
not warmly embrace the prospect of "insider" research. "People who are intimately involved in a setting," they write, "find it difficult to distance themselves from personal concerns and from their common-sense understanding of what is going on. For them, more often than not, their opinions are more than 'definitions of the situation'; they are the truth" (1982, p. 57).

These authors are also critical of such research endeavors because they claim people who know the researcher are far less able to relate to him/her as a neutral observer. The subjects in such studies, therefore, feel constrained to express their "true" feelings.

Insider researchers, it would appear, require the means to step outside their local roles, or at least remove themselves from direct participation in everyday situations of which they normally are a part. One way to partially decontaminate such potentially inhibited situations, at least from the standpoint of pursuing a research agenda, might be a long series of videotapes in which that researcher sometimes is, and sometimes is not an observed subject. But mechanical recordings of human activities present their own problems.
Videotapes and Retrospective Analysis

While modern-day researchers have an array of sophisticated recording devices available to them, not all agree on the ability to reconstruct a "reality," let alone the reality of a human environment on the basis of their analysis. For some researchers, videotapes are "faithful and patient observers," remembering "what they see, no matter how complex, and they can record steadily for long periods of time." (Dabbs, 1982, p. 38). They serve, in Mehan's words, "as an extrasomatic 'memory' that allows researchers to examine materials extensively and repeatedly" (1979, p. 16).

But there is disagreement among researchers concerning the product of these recordings. Some claim their very richness is overburdening, that they often "record more data than one can ever actually use." (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 161). Others find that recordings in general cannot compete with a human observer "as a person constantly absorbs a wider variety of data than any mechanical device can record." (Wilcox, 1982, p. 460). Ultimately, when such questions arise the notion of researcher as research instrument must prevail. The adjudication of debates concerning the adequacy or inadequacy of data gathered through any mechanical means must fall to the researcher. As
Edwards and Westgate (1987, p. 57) write, the choice is one that "reflects working assumptions about interaction...and the kinds of data needed."

There are other concerns researchers have raised concerning video and other mechanical recordings which do not relate directly to the issue of whether or not sufficient data is recorded. One of these concerns is reactivity to the recording instrument. Guba and Lincoln (1985, p. 196), in their discussion of subject–observer relationships in observational research, cite the "Candid Camera" technique as the epitome of nonparticipant observer observing an unaware subject in a natural setting. Entree into a research setting is usually not as anonymous as this, and the presence of recording instruments (in addition to the researcher as a research instrument) poses problems for the capture of some types of natural behaviors (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 158).

Further, even when participants are aware that recording is underway, some researchers have acknowledged that issues surrounding consent appear. Tannen (1984, p. 34) mentions this problem and the way she dealt with it. Research involving individuals engaged in public activities (e.g., any stranger, sans camera, could observe the same flow of activities as
recorded) are certainly not immune from such concerns, but interactions in such arenas are not inherently private as to warrant limited access to such settings.

Focused Observation and Data Analysis

A moment ago the point was made that observation needs focus. Indeed, in a world of sensation, focus is an absolute necessity. Observation in the context of qualitative research seeks to discern those "elements that are patterned or distributed systematically but unevenly across space, time, or other elements" (Dabbs, 1982, p. 37). But what determines the elements to be observed? Spradley (1980, p. 78) provides a "descriptive question matrix" which combines nine categories (space, object, act, activity, event, time, actor, goal and feeling) and results in 81 possible ways to pose a question about a given situation under scrutiny. When one asks a large number of such questions, (for example, combining the categories of time and activity, "How do activities vary over time?") one conducts what he calls a "grand tour observation." More focused questions, based on particulars of a situation, result in what he calls "mini-tours."

Spradley demonstrates a circularity of data collection and analysis in his model of the ethnographic
research cycle. It is a useful model to show that the process occurs in direct contact with the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. But however seamless this process might appear, that circle is more properly a spiral, or, if a geometric figure can be used, a cone, with the base of that object representing the beginning, and the tip of the cone, the result of that inquiry.

Indeed, such "selectivity," say Green and Evertson, "is an inevitable characteristic of any tool, representational system, or program of research. It is not possible to record all aspects of reality with any given system or tool or in any single research project" (1986, p. 165).

The data collected in conventional qualitative research are typically recorded in field notes, at least in the observational phase. Other types of data (documents, interview transcripts, photographs, etc.) account for a rich mixture of material which sooner or later are incorporated into the researcher's knowledge of the setting and inevitably help to create the deep texture of insight which is characteristic of this research approach. But that texture requires structure.
Form, Structure, Meaning

It is assumed by qualitative researchers that descriptive data is collected for a purpose, namely, to provide the evidence upon which certain statements about specific phenomenon can legitimately be made. Many, though not all, engender a humility as they approach such a task. Tannen is one of these. At the outset, she admits that any interpretation of a set of data is only one interpretation, based on a complex of reasons unique to the interpreter (1984, p. 37).

Interpretations of data are predicated on a researcher's recognition of patterns. Dabbs suggests "only by examining the patterning of measures can one hope to develop metaphors that do justice to complex phenomena" (1982, p. 37). Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 153) too, recommend that a researcher "play" with metaphors in an effort to escape the nearsightedness of close exposure to data.

Searching for metaphors to convey the essential elements of accumulated data, it seems to me, is an effort to relate to an everyday frame of reference. This is both convenient and useful, but it is only the first step toward analysis and presentation of such data.
Frames of Reference

A critical and essential component in approaching data analysis is acknowledging, or at least reaffirming the inherent frame of reference which undergirds the study, and thus, the analysis of accumulated data. This assists the researcher in a) the inspection of descriptive data b) the discernment of significant patterns (significant to the study at hand) in that data, and 3) planning for the presentation of results of the perceived patterns.

This study of library student assistants, for example, is an observational study framed along the lines of social interaction as has been noted in Chapter I.

Given a predilection toward a view of a human environment such as this, it will be readily seen that a research study heavily weighted toward observation, as this one is, is similarly heavily dependent upon observed instances of interactions between actors.

The principal research question posed here seeks to understand the contribution of student library assistants; these principles of social interaction frame the manner in which data is collected and viewed. Correspondingly, data from sources other than direct observation (for example, interview data and documents)
are scrutinized for their content relevant for the understanding and comprehension of this social interaction.

Sensitizing Concepts

Sensitizing concepts are developed and employed, as Patton (1980) suggests, when a researcher places "particular emphasis on certain kinds of observations." Such constructions are useful in that "they alert us to ways of organizing the experience and making decisions about what to record." Although the 81 questions posed in Spradley's descriptive question matrix, described above, provides a smorgasbord of choices to approach the description of a particular setting, a further exploration of allied literatures proves useful.

The Service Literature

The services provided by student library assistants to patrons resemble those provided by clerical personnel in a variety of other settings. Such transactions are neither random nor accidental, and have certain common features. Czepiel and his associates (1985) have explored this area in depth. Their work provides a conceptual framework about service transactions which is in basic agreement with the social interaction theory.
The service literature is extensive and, not unlike the library literature, built upon prescriptive notions of how service ought to be provided rather than how it is provided. Hollander (1985), however, has reviewed a broad spectrum of this literature, and finds several enduring themes which are also useful in consideration of student library assistants. Those themes include:

1. A differential significance exists between the service provider and the customer. That is, the transaction is usually an event of some importance to the customer, while it is routine to the service provider.

2. There often is a degree of hostility and antipathy of service workers toward customers. Service workers often do not feel their efforts are appreciated.

3. Special treatment is desired by many customers in some service situations.

4. Customer reactions to service providers are influenced by special aspects (unrelated to skill) of the provider including age, sex, race, appearance, dress, and setting.

5. Service providers develop coping strategies which result in some satisfaction with their work, taking pride and pleasure in their work.

Social Organizational Studies

The nature of the work performed by student assistants has dimensions which go beyond the scope of this study, but certain activities which routinely occur in the library setting have, in themselves, been studied. Erving Goffman, for example, is well known for
his work on the subject of social performances. His writings provide a mother lode of valuable insight. He suggests "A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated... To be a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto." (1959, p. 75).

Other works on social organization which provide insights are those focused on special environmental conditions related to the provision of services. Among these are studies on queuing and waiting. Schwartz (1975) published the first book-length work on this subject. Among the wide-ranging issues he covers are those surrounding power, deference, and queue discipline.

The Literature of Helping

If the activity of student assistants in the performance of their duties can be seen as a helping behavior, then a large literature may be sampled for deeper insights into that aspect of their work. Brammer (1973, p. 21) for example, notes: "our principal helping
tool is ourselves acting spontaneously in response to the rapidly changing demands of the helping relationship."

SUMMARY

An inspection of the professional literature concerning student library assistants reveals a long-standing interest in the subject, but that literature, though it has provided service to the profession, is both prescriptive and shows a relatively narrow research base.

Focusing on its cultural aspects, a study of student assistants in a library setting joins a growing number of institutional studies focused on the everyday activities in the setting. A diffuse literature concerning the nature and exploration of everyday life is available for the pioneering researcher whose own professional canon does not yet include a body of literature in the areas of culture, ethnographic and qualitative research methodologies and data analysis.

Finally, it is daunting to consider being among the first to apply a new research strategy in a particular setting. This literature review reveals that this study has responded to a clarion call. Others must follow.
The remainder of this dissertation shall focus on the methodologies and findings of a study which proposes to significantly broaden the understanding of the participation of student assistants in an academic library setting.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

At its core, this study was guided by a professional interest in the life of student assistants in college libraries. It found support and structure for inquiry in social interaction theory. That theoretical approach, as was mentioned in chapter one, holds to the principle that human society is constituted of interacting units. Interactions which occur in this human society structure not only units' interaction, but the interaction itself. And finally, interactions are patterned or structured in a wider environmental context.

This chapter discusses the research design which revealed the complex world of the library student assistant which is described in detail in Chapter IV, ahead. As the literature review in Chapter II showed, this level of complexity has not previously been revealed in studies about library student assistants.

Beginning with a description of the setting where this study was made, this chapter also considers what
and how data were collected. A section dealing with
data analysis is followed by a question-by-question
summary of the data collection and analysis procedures
employed. This chapter concludes with a discussion of
measures taken to assure trustworthiness of the data
collected and analyzed during the course of this study.

THE SETTING

This study was conducted at the Courtright Memorial
Library at Otterbein College, a small, private, four
year college located in the suburban Columbus, Ohio.

Activities which occurred at that library's main
circulation area were the main focus of observations

Site Selection

This site was chosen for three reasons. First, the
site was readily accessible to the researcher who, at
the time the study commenced, was employed as the
assistant director. There was also a friendly
willingness on the part of the library staff to
participate in the study.

Second, the phenomena this study sought to
investigate, public service encounters between student
assistants and library users, were easily observed and
occurred frequently in this setting.

And third, a propitious availability of recording equipment, as well as technical assistance and expertise at this setting, made this an appealing research site.

The College

Otterbein College, of which the research site is a part, was founded in 1847 and is one of the oldest private colleges in Ohio. Although it has deep liberal arts roots, like many other colleges of similar background, Otterbein's graduates opt for degrees in Business Administration or Computer Science. Still, the commitment to traditional liberal arts is evidenced in a required core of Integrative Studies department courses, which survey broad curricular topics through a framework of intellectual inquiry stressing analytical and critical thinking skills.

The official enrollment is 2,200 full time equivalent students. A little more than half that number are traditional aged college students (18-22) who live on campus. The remainder of the enrolled students are traditional-aged students who live off-campus, older adult students enrolled in evening degree programs, and older adult students returning to college for non-degree work.
Minority and foreign students account for less than 5% of the student population. The high tuition at this college has, on the whole, put it out of the financial means of lower socio-economic families and most of the students (though a majority receive financial aid) come from white middle to upper middle class families.

Approximately 130 full time equivalent faculty members teach at this college. The majority serve full time, but because there has been a recent trend to offer evening and weekend classes, there is a growing number of part-time and adjunct faculty.

The Library

The library which serves this college is housed in a spacious (54,000 sq. ft.) three story building. Fifteen years old, the air-conditioned building is one of the newest buildings on campus.

The library contains over 150,000 volumes and has separate collections of periodicals, government documents, and archives. The basement of the library contains a media center which is not directly under the administrative control of the library.

The library has a seating capacity of over 500 in study carrels, tables and chairs, and couches generously distributed throughout the building.
The turnstile count for the calendar year 1987 showed 164,239 visitors entered and departed the building.

In the 1986/87 scholastic year 50,701 items were circulated to patrons. This may be translated as an average of about 23 items per student, per year.

Participants

The participants in this study are constituted in three groups.

Library Users

The first group, the library users, are largely the students who attend the college. Library users include the faculty and administrative staff of the college. Finally, there are library patrons who are unaffiliated with the college—local adult residents and high school students who may or may not hold a borrowing card to take materials out of the library but are nonetheless welcome to use library materials.

Student Assistants

The second group of participants, on whom the principal attention of this study is focused, are the student assistants who staff the circulation desk of
this library. The number of student employees varies from school term to term, but generally there are between thirty and thirty-five students employed at this library.

In the 1986/87 scholastic year, student assistants worked a total of 8,437 hours in the library. The majority of students employed in the library have some assigned duties at the main circulation desk, which at the time this study was conducted, was staffed 82 hours per week during the regular academic term. The student assistants range from freshman to senior, with female outnumbering male assistants. Student assistants work three to nine hours per week. Most are on work study and are paid at minimum wage rates.

Professional Librarians

The last group of participants are the professional librarians who staff this library. The staff consists of a director, an assistant director, and six other permanent staff members in professional or paraprofessional positions. There are also two permanent clerical workers on staff.
PRE-STUDY PHASE

This study was conceived in the first weeks of 1988 with a definite, if unfocused, interest in studying library student assistants. During what I call the pre-study phase, four distinct operations were accomplished.

Exploratory Data Collection

In the formative stage of this study, the setting was viewed with a wide lens. Much time was spent simply watching what happened. A new employee, my lack of familiarity with the setting contrasted sharply with that of some of the student assistants who had been an active part of the setting for over three years. In the early days of this study I was frequently reminded of my five months of exposure to the library's people, policies, and procedures.

Preliminary efforts at this time included locating a focus for observation where student workers interacted with library patrons in a variety of activities. The library had two circulation counter areas, and because a greater number of exchanges occurred at the first floor (main) area, that one was selected. Figure 1 is a diagram of the first floor where observations were conducted for this study.
Figure 1: First Floor Plan of Observed Library
Though I had secured an observational focus, I soon learned, however, that the counter area I wanted to observe was some fifty feet away from the nearest table to which I had access. Details of some hushed conversations in the customary quiet of the library were extremely difficult to make out from that distance. I missed hearing what appeared to be essential details of many conversations. Relying solely on my presence in "real time" and with no recourse to recordings of this activity, I perceived significant problems with this approach.

Moreover, I encountered a situation which I never anticipated. I found that as I sat in the library, observing the unfolding activities, on several occasions I was interrupted by students seeking assistance in the library. They correctly identified me as an assistance-giver, but incorrectly thought I was "on-duty." As I came to regard the study focusing on evening hours, ordinarily busy times, I came to regard direct observation as untenable and considered mechanical recordings as a partial solution.

Experimental Mechanical Recordings

At the time, the problems surrounding poorly comprehended conversations appeared to doom this study.
Several approaches were investigated including concealed microphones attached to an adjacent amplifier and tape recorder, inexpensive wireless microphones whose signal was received on an adjacent FM radio, and videocameras. Ultimately, after weeks of testing various combinations of borrowed and purchased audio-visual recording equipment, a compact video camcorder was selected for production of the study’s videotape recordings. To assist others who contemplate creating similar recordings, Appendix A contains a thorough discussion of the combinations of equipment which eventually, though torturously, resulted in the successful recordings used in this study.

Deciding When, What, and Where

Three sources of information about the setting which I intended to study assisted me in making decisions surrounding when, what, and where I would videotape for subsequent inspection. First, I had the testimony of key informants on the scene, my fellow librarians, who had a sense of the flow of activities in the library. I learned that evening hours were among the busiest for the provision of service at the main circulation desk. I also learned that there were variations in activity through the week, and through the
academic quarter.

Since my aim was to observe natural activities in as much variety as possible, there seemed no alternative but to plan for observation over a fairly long period of time. Guided by the recommendations of my informants, I settled on observation of weekday evening hours.

The second source of information came from the student assistants I expected to observe. I asked them about activity in the library. They confirmed what others had told me and suggested the library was often busy during evening hours.

The third source of information was my own perception of what activities the students were involved in. It was basically my decision, for example, to attempt to record as much as could be seen of the circulation desk as possible. This is because I observed a going to and fro at various points at the counter as the students interacted with library patrons. An early metaphor I used to describe the students on duty was to liken them to pilots on a seabound ship, their duties taking them occasionally port and starboard.
Obvious or Inconspicuous?

Early experimental attempts to record service encounters between the student assistants and library users ultimately influenced the final routine placement of the camcorder. I reconsidered my general goals for this study, that is, to observe naturally occurring patterns of interaction between the student assistants and library patrons, and decided that it was more important to preserve that naturalness as far as possible.

The camera was mounted on a tripod some seventy feet from the counter in a rarely visited corner of the library. Except for changing tapes every two hours, the camcorder was left undisturbed. The placement of the camera put it out of the way, but in the course of ten weeks of filming thirty-six instances (out of 4,010 recorded incidents) of overt reaction to the camera occurred. The reactivity to the camera will be discussed at the end of this chapter, below.

By opting to handle the issue of filming in this way I accepted that I could not zoom in on particularly interesting actions. But, like Tannen who accepted limitations posed by a fixed position tape recorder to record conversational events, I agreed with her that "information lost from nonverbal channels, such as
facial expressions, gestures and body movements, is rarely totally different from that preserved in the speech channel" (1984, p. 36).

Issues of Confidentiality

Much consideration had been given to the issues surrounding confidentiality and the videotaping planned for this study. The problem was addressed by four approaches. First, permission to videotape was secured from the library director. Second, the Policies and guidelines for review of research, development, and related activities involving human subjects at the Ohio State University was reviewed prior to data collection. This study met criteria of anonymity for the individuals who would be observed and further, it involved the undisturbing observation of on-going activities of an adult population. Third, numerous informal conversations with the student assistants and the professional library staff were held to dispel any misconceptions about the purposes of the recordings. And finally, student assistants on duty were asked to respond honestly to any queries posed by library users who wanted information about the filming. Once the filming schedule commenced, the students on duty were aware when filming was actually underway.
Additional measures were taken when transcription of videotapes began, as only library personnel were routinely identified by name, library patrons, even when they are known, were not, as a rule, identified by name.

COMMENCEMENT OF VIDEOTAPING

The pre-study planning phase of this study stipulated that the primary observational data base would be a collection of videotapes. They were to be a record of episodes of naturally occurring service transactions between library patrons and the library staff at the main circulation desk of the Courtright Memorial Library.

Videotaping commenced at 6:00 pm on March 28, 1988 and continued four evenings per week for the subsequent ten weeks. Except for evenings when I was ill or otherwise indisposed, I remained after my normal workday (8-5) to arrange the camera setup and film change. My own work schedule that quarter required that I work one weekday evening (Monday), so that I appeared in the videotapes produced on those evenings. The other three evenings were spent reviewing previous evenings' tapes, or completing the review of the literature.

Recordings were produced without difficulty. No mechanical failures prevented the routine accumulation
of twenty four six-hour tapes (144 hours). Filming was concluded at 10 pm, May 30, 1988.

COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

During the first weeks of videotaping other data sources were collected. Chief among them were a series of student worker self-descriptions solicited from those student assistants who were being filmed night after night. Eight students produced documents which ranged from brief to elaborate.

At the same time, a series of work sheets which had been distributed among the professional librarians for a campus-wide survey of professional standards was secured. The complete library student assistants' handbook was also obtained and typed onto a computer word processor for later analysis.

Other documentary sources collected for this study included the student assistants' procedures manual and a series of narrative comments pertaining to library services which appeared in a widely distributed library survey.

Obtaining non-observational data sources was intended to provide the means of triangulation with patterns seen in the observational data.
FORMAL INTERVIEWS

In February and March 1989 ten formal interviews were conducted to add a further explanatory dimension to the observational data which had been previously accumulated. Five of these interviews were conducted with student assistants who had appeared as regular participants in the videotapes. Five non-student workers (all seniors) were also interviewed. They were chosen on the basis of their regular presence in the library and their willingness to participate in this phase of the study.

All ten of these interviews were fully transcribed using a standard transcribing format. Each transcript page was numbered and each line was also numbered to facilitate later coding and analysis.

The typed transcripts ranged from 38 to 136 pages in length; the total page count for all ten transcripts was 664 pages. A twenty page sample of the interview with "Alicia," whose transcript was 136 pages long shown in Appendix B.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study was undertaken to comprehend the nature of the provision of public services by student assistants in this setting by addressing three major
The reader will note that the collection and analysis of data proceeded with of a usual consideration of at least a triplicity of sources: observational or documentary data contrasted with interview data from student assistants and library users. Designed with a social interaction perspective, this triangulation allowed for consideration and analysis of sometimes contrasting views in the data.
Dimensions of Social Situations

An efficient and comprehensive means of exploring everyday social situations, the manifestations of social interaction, has been proposed through accounting for nine inter-related dimensions (Spradley, 1980, p. 78). They are described as follows:

1. Space, which is defined as physical place or places.
2. Actors, which are defined as the people involved.
3. Activities, which are defined as a set of related acts people do.
4. Objects, which are defined as the physical things that are present in a setting.
5. Acts, which are defined as single actions that people do.
6. Events, which are defined as a set of related activities that people carry out.
7. Time, which is defined as the sequencing that takes place over time.
8. Goals, which are defined as the things people are trying to accomplish.
9. Feelings, which are defined as emotions felt and expressed.

These social dimensions serve as organizing units for data which not only enable one to look down through an observed setting, cutting through layers of meaning, but they serve as instruments for perceiving larger, more subtle patterns of culture which are not immediately apparent to participants in the setting.
The first step in applying Spradley’s analytical protocol to a pool of accumulated data is coding.

Coding

Three different kinds of data were accumulated in this study: observational (videotapes), interview (audiotapes), and documentary data. While each type of data yielded important information for the study, coding of information from these sources proceeded along different, but related, lines.

Coding of Observational Data

Twenty-four six hour videotapes were created during the observational phase of this study. Details concerning their planning and creation have already been given in the above sections on research design and data collection.

A necessary first step in dealing with the videotapes was to determine the level of specificity that was immediately required so that sought-after patterns of activity could be discovered. The tapes amounted to 144 hours of real time, or, put another way, 8,640 minutes. Or put still another way, a little more than half a million (518,400) seconds. Because this study was focused on a broad view of the phenomena of
service encounters in the library setting, the flow of social situations recorded on the videotapes was initially explored from a macro perspective.

A decision was made to systematically identify where on the tapes (tape counter number) and when during the observation period (time and date) that service encounters occurred. Further, it was decided to briefly describe each unfolding service encounter in terms of some meaningful cultural information which could be used later. Two separate projects were undertaken to accomplish these tasks.

Access Phase One, Step One:
Recording Sheet Development

The first step in dealing with the videotaped observational data was the creation of a standard form on which to systematically and accurately record ongoing service encounters.

Several prototype recording forms were experimented with, but the series of probing questions posed on Spradley's Descriptive Question Matrix (1980, pp. 82-83) pertaining to acts, activities, and events proved to be the inspiration for the construction of the final coding form (Figure 2).
This Videotape Content Index form recorded data related to the social situation domains (mentioned above) pertaining to activity, actor, time, space, and object. These domains were selected because they could be extracted from the videotapes with a minimal amount of observer inference.

**Access Phase One, Step Two:**

**Developing Coding Conventions**

Once an acceptable coding sheet was developed and the recorded domains were determined, coding conventions were devised to briefly capture the domains of activity, actor, time, space and object.

**Emergent activity categories.** No pre-set categories determined what was recorded on the forms, however, conventional terms emerged to describe what was repeatedly observed as coding proceeded. "Change," for example, came to represent occasions when patrons sought to exchange their paper money for dimes or quarters.

When new behaviors were seen, a unique descriptor was created. In this way, new elements identified in this cultural setting were consistently recognized.
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<th>Date/Time</th>
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<th>Transaction Type</th>
<th>Action Synopsis</th>
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Figure 2
Videotape Content Index Form
Unique categories served as models of comparison in the on-going coding enterprise.

For example, from time to time, students had to deal with persons who triggered the book security system because a particular book or magazine had not been properly discharged. When this behavior was first observed on videotape, it was described as a "Security System" incident. That term was descriptive enough to provide a meaningful distinction between that sort of encounter and, say, responding to a reference question.

Later, however, it was observed that student assistants turned off the security system for a student with a heart pace maker to allow him exit from the library without electronic interrogation which might interfere with his pace maker. In view of this new development, the earlier categories of "Security System" were reinspected and recoded "Security Violation," while the pace maker's occasional exit from the library elicited the code "Security System Disable."

This flexible coding system also enabled the recording of multiple service requests by the same patron, for example, an almost simultaneous request for a closed reserve item and change for the photocopier so the patron could immediately duplicate it.
The list of observed service encounter activity categories which were eventually uncovered by this process is shown with their frequency of appearance in Appendix C.

**Actor codes.** Student assistants and other library personnel observed in the video recordings were identified by name or initials in the coding sheet. Library patrons were not routinely noted by name, but were listed in the encounter description by sex.

After coding had proceeded for a short time it was observed that a number of encounters appeared to involve several patrons who simultaneous sought assistance. A closer inspection, however, showed that often there was a single primary service seeker, while sometimes one, or (rarely) two other companions waited for the person to complete the transaction. Such transactions were noted with the number and gender of non-service seeking companions.

Instances where the student assistants were aided in some way by a professional librarian were also noted so it later was easy to isolate those encounters in which the student assistants acted alone, or in concert, with the professional staff.
**Time codes.** The videotapes contained an electronically created clock noting the date and time in the lower left hand portion of the screen. These were used as the principal markers in coding each observed service encounter.

An additional reference point was the videotape player's counter number which was observed with playback of the tape. This number was listed on the code sheet as a means for aiding retrieval of specific episodes at a later time.

**Space codes.** Space, as a social situation dimension, has significance, but the space upon which the camera was confined was the ell-shaped counter space at which the service events occurred. Preliminary observations suggested that patron's use of this space was worth noting, as there were particular service points where many people congregated.

The counter space which directly faced the camera and what was familiarly known by those who worked in the library as the main counter area was already conveniently marked. The five units which made up the wood veneer counter were attached together. The one inch black colored seams were easily seen from a distance and became grid marks for noting where patrons...
arrived and moved to during the course of their encounter with the student assistants. During coding, the initial point of contact received a numeric value, depending on their proximity to the six visible stripes of the counter area.

Unfortunately, the other perpendicular counter space was not physically referenced in any reliable way, and so the coding convention was simply to refer to activities which occurred along that twelve foot space as "West Counter."

Object codes. Objects used in the majority of routine service encounters were not mentioned, but note was taken of the introduction of extraordinary objects into the setting. One student, for example, who was seen frequently in the tapes had an unusual habit of loudly dropping his always-full book bag on the counter top with a loud thump, something no one else ever did.

Objects, when noted, were mentioned in the optional recording space on the form.

Access Phase One, Step Three:

The Coding Task

The decision that coding should proceed in the spirit of process rather than adherence to set
categories allowed the task to begin. Coding of the twenty-four six hour videotapes, a basically mechanical process, consumed most of the summer of 1988. By the middle of September three handwritten volumes, 400 pages in length, completed this phase of activity. A total of 4,010 coded entries were recorded.

Two special procedures were used to distinguish noteworthy service encounter episodes. First, the data recording form's column marked "Action Synopsis" allowed, in addition to certain required data elements, for the free-form inclusion of any additional information such as direct quotations, summarization, theoretical notes, and so forth.

A second convention was to mark entries with a small green square to visually flag entries which had special clarity for full audio/video transcription. Later on, these episodes were transcribed. Appendix C contains a sample facsimile page of a handwritten Videotape Content Index form.

The procedures for insuring the coding undertaken reliably and accurately reflected what occurred on the videotapes are described in the section below headed "Trustworthiness of Analysis."
Access Phase Two

While the activity described in Access Phase One produced an undeniable resource, simple enumeration of that magnitude of data proved a staggering chore. Since a uniform structure of definition and nomenclature had been imposed with all but the "Synopsis of Activity" portion, preliminary efforts were undertaken to place this information in a computerized data base.

Ultimately, a program written with Ashton-Tate's dBaseIII database management software was developed which accommodated recording of each of the social situation domains of activity, actor, time, space, and object. The only information which was not entered from the handwritten forms were the narrative "Synopsis of Activity" portions which could still be retrieved from the original code sheets.

During the months of October and November, 1988, the data base of 4,010 transactions was typed into computer memory. Six separate reports, 990 pages in length, were created. They were organized either alphabetically or numerically, depending on the primary type of information. Those reports were sorted by normal chronology (time domain), by patron position at counter (space domain), by patron sex (actor domain), by service provider (actor domain), by transaction type
(activity domain), and by time (transactions sorted on a
time field) (time domain).

The transaction data base, which can be used to
disclose a number of subtle relationships among the
recorded data, and the reports mentioned above have
greatly assisted in the uncovering of patterned activity
in this setting.

Samples of the reports produced with dBaseIII
computer software are attached at Appendix E.

Coding of Interview Data

Five student assistants who regularly appeared in
the videotaped observation data and five college seniors
who were regular library users were interviewed in
February 1989. These interviews, resulting in 664 pages
of typed transcripts were coded for analysis in the
following manner.

Typed appearance

Each transcript page was double-spaced. Each page
was numbered. Each line on which typing appeared was
numbered. This arrangement proved helpful for locating
contextualized words, phrases, and statements. A sample
of a portion of the interview with "Alicia" has been
attached in Appendix B.
Coding

Transcripts were coded anticipating further analysis of selected social setting domains (Spradley, 1980). Spradley's formal analysis procedures will be described later in this chapter. The codes developed here, however, were generated on the basis of three types of cultural meanings which he describes as follows (pp. 88-90):

**Folk terms.** These are terms which are drawn from the actual words and phrases used by the people in any given social situation. Dealing with verbatim transcripts, the location of folk terms was not a difficult task.

**Mixed terms.** These are analytical terms that may or may not originally appear as a folk term, but are meaningful because they account for variations in particular categories which folk terms do not. In these transcripts, for example, those individuals who visited the library were called "patrons," "library users," "jocks," "professors," and "students". Each folk term meaningfully describes certain persons who use the library, but only an analytical term (which was also
used as a folk term) "library users" accounts for them all.

Analytical terms. These are terms which seek to describe tacit, unspoken, meanings in a cultural setting. These terms are purely analytical in that they are inferred from what people do, which is to say, they are inferred from perceived patterns of cultural behavior.

The analytical term "seniority" was attached to a response given by one of the student assistants responding to the following question:

Int: Alright, one of the other questions is, what's keeping people here. What has kept you here?

Allen: Well, I have, I got work study each year, that's one thing, and it's nice here. Once, once you're here for awhile you can arrange better hours, and not have to work weekends all the time. You get more responsibility.

Creating Access to Transcript Coding

The bulk of coded transcript pages inhibited efficient retrieval of codes. Familiarity with the dBaseIII database management computer software earlier in this study offered a solution.

A program was developed and a database program was created which stored the following information:
interview number, transcript page and line number, code category, and a note field. This note field briefly contextualized the appearance of the category so that, at a glance, it could be determined whether the code was of a folk, mixed, or analytical nature.

The five student assistant transcripts were coded in full. The other five transcripts (college seniors who frequently used the library) were selectively coded for portions dealing with their perceptions of library services and library student assistants. Appendix E shows a sample of the 79 page computer generated report providing an alphabetical listing of 1,135 contextualized codes.

**Reliability of Coding**

In his discussion of coding procedures, Spradley (1980) does not mention the danger inherent in the creation of mixed and analytic codes, that is, that they run the risk of being idiosyncratic to the researcher. In the section below, "Trustworthiness of Analysis," the procedures used to minimize this risk are described.

**Coding of Documentary Materials**

The total accumulation of documentary materials generated in this study did not warrant coding in the
manner that has been described above for observational and interview data. Statistical and historical data collected as background information were not coded.

Two sources of documentary information were coded.

**Student Self-Descriptions**

Eight student assistants who were regular participants in the videotaping voluntarily provided a written job description which recited their personal perspectives on what they believed their job was. These descriptions were typed on a word processor and handled similar to an interview transcript with numbered pages and numbered lines.

The twenty-five typed self-description pages underwent a coding process which established the folk, mixed, and analytical codes, as described above. These activity codes, which were used in later analyses are shown in Appendix G.

**Narrative Evaluative Portions of Library Survey**

Brief comments which appeared in 230 library student-completed surveys which pertained to the library's resources and services were coded for their content. Although a minor category of data, these
surveys supplied useful information for one part of the study seeking outsider comments.

Formal Analysis of Data

The work of Spradley (1980) has been touched on in Chapter II and again, earlier in this chapter. His approach to the task of discerning the structured, patterned nature of human culture (set forth in social interaction theory) with a multi-step analytical process was applied in this study.

Spradley's Analytical Process

Briefly, this process begins with the assumption that what people do can first be described in terms of one or more dimensions which characterize social situations. Those dimensions (space, actor, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals, and feelings) have already been alluded to.

Patterns and Culture

Analysis is essentially a systematic search for patterns, and in Spradley's view, the discovery of patterns among these social situation dimensions reveals the underlying human culture. To reveal that culture one must first discover the essential elements
of that culture, and then find how those elements are organized.

**Cultural domains.** Spradley calls the basic elements of culture "cultural domains." Categories of meaning, cultural domains consist of three parts, namely, a cover term, included terms, and a semantic relationship.

A cover term is the name of the cultural domain. Earlier in this chapter, in the discussion concerning coding procedures, it was pointed out that cultural domain names may be assigned from folk terms, mixed terms, or analytical terms.

Included terms constitute the second part of a cultural domain. All of the included terms in a cultural domain are in some way subordinate to the cover term. The cover term literally covers, that is, accounts for, all the included terms in the domain.

Finally, each cultural domain contains a semantic relationship which links all of the included terms to the cover term.

**Universal Semantic Relationships**

The requirement to link included terms with cover terms necessitates a series of semantic relationship
forms. Spradley (1980, p. 93) describes nine distinct semantic relationships. These relationships are shown below in Table 1.

**Analysis for Particular Domains**

The semantic relationships listed in Table 1 invite selective explorations of particular cultural domains. This analytical procedure was closely followed as the research questions posed by this study were considered in light of the data collected. The specific semantic relationships explored through domain analysis for each of this study's questions will be disclosed in a moment.

**Taxonomic Analysis**

A further extension of domain analysis described by Spradley is a taxonomic analysis. This seeks to discover levels within categories. In this study, taxonomies created from this level of analysis were useful for revealing patterns among different kinds of recurring behaviors. The object of this level of analysis is to find connections between the included terms of a cultural domain uncovered through a domain analysis. A domain analysis begins with a particular cover term and a semantic relationship and seeks to
Table 1

Universal Semantic Relationships

1. Strict inclusion (x is a **kind** of y)
2. Spatial (x is a **place** in y) or (x is a **part** of y)
3. Cause-effect (x is a **result** of y)
4. Rationale (x is a **reason** for doing y)
5. Location for (x is a **place** for doing y) action
6. Function (x is **used** for y)
7. Means-end (x is a **way to do** y)
8. Sequence (x is a **step (stage)** in y)
9. Attribution (x is an **attribute** (characteristic) of y)

Adapted from J. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, 1980.
locate appropriate included terms which belong in a particular cultural domain. The taxonomic analysis looks for patterns among the included terms.

Componential Analysis

Depending on the complexity of the data and the questions posed, one final level of analysis employed in this study sought to discover one final subtlety among the cultural categories, namely the attributes—components of meaning—assigned to cultural categories.

This level of analysis explored the dimensions of contrast which could be discerned through comparisons of related cultural domains. Contrasting elements emerge from explorations in particular data and emerge only through a familiarity with them.

Summary

The foregoing analytical procedures were developed to systematically reveal the largely invisible cultural matrix of patterned activity which underlies social interaction in this setting. To a large extent, discovering with precision what activities student assistants were involved in affected the course of the other research questions posed here. Like any qualitative study, questions arise and are reformulated
by the emerging data and understanding of the situation under investigation.

The next section will show how this study applied these analytical procedures. Findings generated through these procedures are reported in Chapter IV.

**Analytical Procedures Applied to this Study's Research Questions**

The research questions which were developed over the course of this study have already been outlined in Chapter I. Below, each question will be repeated and followed by a discussion of the data analysis procedures used.

**Question 1.1.** What are the observed and reported public service encounters in which student assistants participate?

**Question 1.2.** In what manner are public service encounters defined and understood? That is:

1.2.1. How are these encounters defined and understood by the library users who initiate them?

1.2.2. How are these encounters defined and understood by student assistants who respond to them?

These sub-questions are related. The analytical procedures used to explore the first sub-question
essentially revealed the second. For convenience of presentation and to minimize repetition, the two sub-questions will treated together both here and in Chapter IV.

**Step one: domain analysis.** A two-part domain analysis was undertaken to determine the range of public service encounters in the coded videotape data, the coded interview transcripts, and the coded documentary sources. The social situation dimension "activity" (a set of related actions people do) was used as a cover term and the semantic relationship Spradley (1980) calls strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y) was employed to uncover the pertinent included terms. It was a two-step process because it took into consideration sources of both the observed and reported included terms pertinent to this category.

**Step one, part one: gathering included terms from observations.** An alphabetical list of the service encounters which were observed in 144 hours of videotapes was created (see Appendix B). The frequency of observations recorded for each of these categories was indicated.
Step one, part two: gathering included terms from non-observational sources. All three of the non-observational sources of data provided a perspective on what student assistants' tasks were. The list of what these sources revealed is attached in Appendix G.

Step one, conclusion: reconciliation. The master list of both observed and reported service encounter categories was prepared from all four sources of data. This concluded the domain analysis. The list, attached in Appendix H was used for the next phase of analysis.

Step two: taxonomic analysis. All the included terms, that is, all those terms which resided in the cultural domains of "X is a kind of service encounter activity" were reexamined to find meaningful relationships among them, but all were subsumed under the broader field of service encounters.

In this analytical phase, attention was focused on aspects of the who? what? and how? evident among these terms. Grounded in the data which were collected from both observational and non-observational sources, this service encounter taxonomy (shown in Figure 4) also provided an organizing structure for the presentation of the kinds of service encounter activities in which
students are involved.

Since the elements which compose this taxonomy arose from the data, it was possible to reenter the data when assembling an elaborated group of findings which are shown in Chapter IV.

**Step three: componential analysis.** The last stage of analysis explored the dimensions of contrast across domains. Those dimensions of contrast which were chosen sought to identify something of the underlying nature of the provision of these services.

Using a form and a method suggested by Spradley (1980), the sub-category domains which appear in the Service Encounter Taxonomy were analyzed using the following dimensions of contrast. They were:

- Receives immediate attention
- Initiated verbally/non-verbally
- Oriented internally or externally

Each of these contrast categories were suggested from exposure to the data. In one interview with a student assistant, she revealed she would let the telephone ring and ring and ring if a customer was waiting for assistance. This contrast category sought to contrast similar behaviors held across the range of service encounter domains and across student assistants.
The verbal/non-verbal contrast category sought to explore the wider occurrence of behaviors observed when students often soundlessly returned their reserve items on the counter top. Were other service encounters managed without explicit verbal cues?

Finally, some service encounter behaviors seemed to be geared to inviting patrons into the library while others seemed to be wishing them farewell. This contrast category sought to investigate the behaviors of patrons as they moved away from the counter and either moved back into the library or departed through the exit gate.

The componential analysis required both a review of previous analytical terms developed through domain and taxonomic analyses as well as the observational data. Among other things, a full week’s worth of detailed field notes (257 pages) from video tapes was produced to achieve this purpose. The results of this procedure will be presented in Chapter IV.

**Question 1.3.: What is the pattern of services provided by student assistants over time?**

The analysis of this sub-question was contingent on the earlier exploration of tasks actually performed by student assistants (sub-question 1.1). Both
observational and non-observational data were used, however, the precise noting of all service encounters recorded during the 144 hours of videotapes, as described above, was crucial for dealing with this sub-question.

Meaningful time frames. The collection of interactions recorded on videotape spanned several levels of time which were explored in depth. These levels were arranged on a continuum beginning at the occurrence of the service encounter at one end and extending on up through the ten week period of observation which represented the activity of evening hours of nearly a complete academic quarter. Figure 3, below, graphically represents the series of nested time units in the videotaped data.

Framing of small units. It was not known until after the coding of events that the 8,640 minutes of videotapes were punctuated by 4,010 service encounters. The average, then, was a little less than one transaction every two minutes.

Service encounters themselves were treated as discrete occurrences in the consideration of question 1.1. In order to create a way of looking at the
videotaped activity over the entire period, the data were framed in 576 sequential quarter hour units. Because each service encounter on the computer data base file was provided a temporal marker, it was possible to make comparisons of what occurred in these fifteen minute periods from several points of view.

Aspects considered. The temporal studies made on the basis of comparisons across the 576 quarter hour
periods enabled the depiction of dynamic features of service provision across the academic quarter, for example, the highest occurring number of service encounters (18) and the lowest (0) in a fifteen minute period. Enumeration of the frequency of service encounters occurring in each fifteen minute period also made possible the discovery of a natural pattern of busy and slow days.

These time studies also made possible, through isolating specific portions of the data, the nature of activities on specific days (e.g. Mondays) across the period of observations.

Finally, combining other elements of each recorded transaction, profiles of service encounters across the observation period were made on the basis of service type requested (e.g., book checkout, reserve request, reference question) and gender of the patron requesting service.

A discussion of what was discovered through these procedures will be found in Chapter IV.

Non-observational data. Sub-question 1.3 was directed toward an exploration of the flow of activity within a temporal context, but the intent of analysis of these time periods was to gain a view of the cultural
significance of this time, and activities occurring within this time.

Partial explanations of the variation in activity from hour to hour, day to day, and week to week were sought through interviews with key informants. They provided a significant source of information with which the observational data can be compared.

The interview transcripts had been coded, as previously described, for contextualized subject access which enabled the efficient retrieval of references to many pertinent subjects. Those which emerged from the free-form coding process dealing with everyday activities included references to evening activity levels, perceptions of daily, weekly and academic term cycles, fast time and slow time.

Analysis of non-observational data concerning everyday activities. A domain analysis of elements concerning the reported temporal aspects of everyday activities was conducted using the semantic relationship of attribution, namely, "X is an attribution (characteristic) of Y." In this case, the "Y" was time.

A taxonomic analysis was conducted upon the included terms uncovered during the domain analysis. The resultant taxonomy of perceptions about time was
compared with what was said about time and activity in this setting, and what was observed.

Other aspects of time. The observational phase of this study was embedded in a relatively brief chronological period which only partially contextualized the meaning of what was recorded. The interviews conducted with key informants were analyzed to discover some of the wider experiential aspects which they felt impinged on the phenomena of student assistants and the service encounter.

For their part, non-assistant informants had a perspective on library services which, in some cases, extended well before their college years. While tangential to this study, which is focused on the more immediate nature of the phenomena of service encounter, the findings from this line of historical inquiry are reported briefly in Chapter IV.

Question 1.4.: What is routine and what is extraordinary among the activities in which student assistants participate?

Once a profile and frequency of service activities was created and explored in sub-questions 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, it was possible to numerically calculate the
routineness or extraordinariness of activities.
Calculations, described in Chapter IV, were made to
assess these quantitative aspects. Basic descriptive
statistics including averages and percentages of the
whole were prepared for purposes of comparison of these
data.

One means of assessing the extraordinariness of a
service encounter in the observational data was to
locate those encounters where the professional
librarians became involved in a particular transaction
which the student assistant was not able to complete.
Instances of this sort had been specially coded as the
Videotape Content Index sheets were prepared and were
included when the computerized data base was created. A
summary of these is in Chapter IV.

Finally, the interview transcripts were searched
for mention of ordinary and extraordinary aspects of
service encounters. Those are duly described in the
next chapter.
Question 2.1.: What are the normative requirements for acting and behaving as a student assistant?

Question 2.2.: What are the normative requirements for acting and behaving as an initiator of a service encounter (library user)?

The brief enterprise in which student assistants and library patrons engage, the service encounter, was considered from both groups' point of view in dealing with these two related questions. The methodological approaches employed, as elsewhere, both observational and non-observational strategies.

Non-observational data. Three sources of information were employed in an attempt to discover the normative rules of behavior for both student assistants as service providers (as seen by themselves and by library users) and for library users as service requestors (as seen by themselves and student assistants). These three sources were the transcripts of interviews with key informants, the student self-descriptions, and the remarks made by students in response to a library questionnaire concerning services and resources.
Normative requirements for student assistants.
This dimension was explored through a domain analysis of the above mentioned non-observational sources by posing a question having the semantic relationship of strict inclusion: "X is a kind of requirement for acting and behaving as a student assistant."

The further analysis of included terms uncovered in the domain analysis was carried through in a taxonomic analysis which revealed additional underlying aspects of what was expected and anticipated of student assistants.

An obviously important source of data was brought to the study in the interviews with non-assistants, but surprisingly candid comments made by the assistants of their co-workers also proved useful.

Normative requirements for service seekers. Just as there are normative requirements for acting and behaving as a student assistant, there are other requirements for service seekers as well. This question was viewed mainly from the point of view of interviews with the student assistants, but some of the non-assistant informants offered their perspectives about how they and their peers ought to approach the service encounter.

A domain analysis on the non-observational data was conducted and was similar to the one just mentioned
which pertained to the student assistants. In this case, the question with the semantic relationship of strict inclusion: "X is a kind of requirement for acting and behaving as an initiator," framed the collection of data.

Once again, the domain analysis was followed by a taxonomic analysis designed to find relationships among the included terms.

Observational data. To gain an understanding of what actually occurred in the course of service encounters between student assistants and library patrons the observational data was reentered. The field notes which had been prepared as a contrast element for the componential analysis of question 1.1 and 1.2. were retrieved. Each recorded transaction in those field notes was isolated on a separate sheet of paper. Groups of service encounter transaction types were assembled and set aside.

Once all the field note transcriptions had been isolated on separate sheets of paper and been placed into categories, they were examined in turn by a critical process of constant comparison. This method, first described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) involved taking each service encounter and comparing it to the
others in the group. The attempt here was to find the range and variation of the behaviors, and thus, create meaningful descriptions based in the data.

This process resulted in the identification of salient elements of specific types of encounters as well as across all the encounters. These elements were compiled for each encounter type in tabular form and were used as checklists to assess videotaped data which had not been transcribed. In general, the completed descriptions held up when introduced to new data.

A fuller description of the findings will be described in the next chapter.

**Point of service requests.** During the videotape coding phase patron position and movement after initial contact were recorded and entered into the computer data base. Queries were made of the data base to determine the regularity of appearance at the point of service.

At the time the observational portion of this study was conducted there was no obvious signage which directed library users to a particular place in the counter area. Nonetheless, books were customarily checked out at one charge machine located at one point of the counter space, change was dispensed from one drawer on another space of the counter, and closed
reserves were checked out from still another. Key informants mentioned that most library users were aware of these distinctions, but chose to observe them or ignore them in unpredictable ways.

The data base was queried to calculate the exact counter position of each service initiation. This position was compared to the actual site of service provision. The database was further queried to find whether the patron moved toward the point of service after initiation of the request.

The results of these computations and a discussion of their implications are listed in the following chapter.

Reported versus observed data. The variances between what was reported by key informants and what was observed on videotaped service encounters were noted as the two sets of data were placed side-by-side. As in other parts of this study where triangulation occurred, this variation is not surprising. The object of the study was to reveal both hidden and recognized elements of the setting.
Question 3.1. What limiting factors are inherent in the library itself?

3.1.1. What part do resources play in limiting the provision of public services?

3.1.2. What part do library rules and regulations play in limiting the provision of public services?

The interaction between student assistant and library user is affected by factors and conditions beyond the control of either party. These questions were posed as a means of discerning part of the wider world in which the service encounter occurs.

**Observational data.** The observational data had been previously examined in such a way as to allow fairly efficient retrieval of information to support the line of inquiry in these questions. During the completion of the Videotape Content Index forms the action synopsis blocks were completed to indicate details about the observed encounters. In cases where, for some reason or another, material was not delivered to the library patron, this was noted on the form.

The methodological procedure began with identifying each of the recorded incidents which involved either limitations on the part of the library, or rules which limited patron requests. If not already available in a
field note form, they were rendered in a narrative field note and set aside for a domain analysis.

**Non-observational data.** Interviews with non-assistant students included questions pertaining to perceptions of library resources, and when and where these informants sought information from other libraries. The responses to these questions were gathered together.

A second source of data concerning library resources and rules was garnered from narrative portions of the library survey which has been alluded to earlier. Comments related directly to the aspect of resources and rules were culled from the surveys.

**Data analysis.** The data generated in pursuit of these two questions was relatively compact and did not require sophisticated analysis. A domain analysis and a taxonomy was prepared from the data. The domain analysis was constructed using a question with a semantic relationship of strict inclusion, "X is a kind of limiting resource/rule."
Question 3.2. What larger institutional (e.g., college) factors affect the provision of services?

The circles of environmental influence on the service encounter in which student assistants and library users participate may be drawn wide, but the significance of these influences decreases the wider the circles are drawn. This study considers no further influences beyond that of the institution in which the college library was situated, although it acknowledges a wider field.

This question was approached methodologically in a way similar to the two issues presented in Question 3.1. Manifested institutional influences were seen from the standpoint of service, when, for example, patrons were turned away because the professor had not placed an item on closed reserve, though the student's syllabus indicated it had been placed on reserve. Similarly, a manifestation of extra-library limitation is seen in situations where a professor had placed a limited number of copies on reserve for a large number of students.

Data analysis and presentation of findings for this question mirror those for Question 3.1.
TRUSTWORTHINESS

The results of deliberate research activity in both the physical and social sciences have traditionally come under scrutiny in the form of questions concerning external validity (the ability to generalize to other settings) and internal validity (to what extent the researcher's presence affects the study). As Burgess (1984) points out, qualitative researchers are limited to showing internal validity, and can only lay legitimate claim that their findings, derived from a range of methods, are both credible and plausible representations of the setting as it was being studied.

Several incidental and deliberate aspects of this study increase the confidence that it represents the phenomena accurately and plausibly, and the findings are worthy of trust.

Insider Perspective

This study sought to explore patterns of social interaction, namely service encounters involving student assistants and library users. Although it has its limitations, the insider perspective routinely provided low inference assessments of what was occurring, simply because the setting was familiar. In other words, because insiders are typically sensitized to a variety
of environmental cues, there is often reduced ambiguity in the discrimination of one behavior from another.

An example of the advantage of an insider perspective was when the videotapes were coded for activity patterns. At one point a patron approached the west counter area. Although his conversation was not clearly heard on the sound track, the request he uttered, a desire to examine the student telephone directory, was understood as the student assistant walked away from the counter, walked into the circulation supervisor's office, picked up a small, blue paperbound book, and carried it over to the library patron. That sort of request was not frequently seen on videotape, and an insider would have an easier time deciphering that transaction than someone new to the setting.

Ethnographic or qualitative research conducted by insiders is occasionally criticized because of the researcher's too-familiar acquaintance with the setting which obscures a clear perception of what is going on. Similarly, the information provided by informants to inside researchers may be purposely inaccurate to guard or protect against reprisals (see Goffman, 1959, for an extensive discussion of this tendency).
This study was inaugurated when this researcher was quite new to the setting (five months on the job) and assigned to the innocuous position of assistant director. No immediate action was planned as a direct consequence of the study, but informants and co-workers were led to believe that the study would eventually lead to a review of operational policies, and, if warranted, policy changes. The post script which follows Chapter V discusses some of the policy issues raised by this study.

The circumstances of researching as an insider in this study, then, were of a sort which enhanced the richness of the data collected. The value of this careful inspection at such an early point of employment resulted in not only an enhanced academic product, but had significant professional implications as well.

Length of Recorded Observation Period

The purpose of this study was to explore patterns of social interaction in a particular time frame. The length of time actually recorded, activities over a ten week period, provided an abundant source of data. Recordings made this time period available for continuous review up to and including the actual writing of this report.
Although the formal recordings ceased on May 30, 1988, as an insider, access to all but the graduating seniors continued through another full year, providing additional opportunities to discuss and understand their behavior.

Multiple Sources of Data

A deliberate strategy was adopted to gather information from multiple sources. These sources were a means of triangulation on certain kinds of phenomena. For qualitative researchers, triangulation across different points of view, across different instances of the same general phenomena, and across different types of analysis is a great source of strength (Burgess, 1984; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1980).

It was well understood that the videotapes themselves had no memory outside their boundaries. Additional information about the phenomena of service was sought from the participants. And just as the student assistants saw their role from one point of view, library users sometimes viewed this same role very differently.

In qualitative studies, Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 44), remind us that issues of "accuracy and comprehensiveness of data" are uppermost in the minds of
researchers in establishing the reliability of their work. In this study, multiple and rich sources of data were gathered to increase the reliability of findings.

Trustworthiness of Data Analysis

While the preceding factors were deemed adequate and sufficient to address the problem of data collection, an effort was made to reduce idiosyncratic data analysis by employing tests of interobserver agreement. The research questions described earlier in this chapter depended on several analyses of data which found multiple applications. Interobserver agreement was sought in three main areas upon which data analysis rested, namely, coding of videotapes for activities; coding of interview data into meaningful subject areas; and coding of field note descriptions into appropriate activity categories.

Independent Observers

Three individuals were approached and acceded to a request to serve as independent observers of these data. Although they were naive to the setting under study, all three had extensive previous contact with libraries and student assistants in the past as a result of their academic careers. Further, two of them had particular
familiarity with ethnographic and observational research techniques. Finally, as a corrective to an insider's perspective, the responses of these independent observers, which varied from the ones of the researcher, served as a means of clarifying activity descriptions.

The independent observers are briefly described below.

**Independent Observer A**

Independent Observer A holds a Ph.D. and is a graduate of the College of Education, the Ohio State University. Independent Observer A had taken several qualitative research methodology courses and employed a qualitative research design for a doctoral dissertation. The observer was employed as an administrator at the Ohio State University.

**Independent Observer B**

Independent Observer B holds a Ph.D. and is a graduate of the College of Education, the Ohio State University. This observer was employed as a foreign language instructor at the Ohio State University.
Independent Observer C

Independent Observer C is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at the Ohio State University. This observer had completed a qualitative research course sequence and was in the process of writing a dissertation employing a qualitative research design.

Tests for Interobserver Agreement

The manner in which independent observers were employed to test the accuracy of the researcher's coding and category choices is described below.

Activity Codes for Behaviors Recorded on Videotape

A list of all 576 quarter hour observation periods was created. Each entry on the list contained the observation date, the observation period (1-16) which related to the actual clock time of observation, and the raw number of observed service encounters. The list was then sorted by number of observed service encounters, by date, and by observation period.

The rank-ordered entries were divided into three groups containing low, moderate, and high amounts of activity; the list was separated at the level of seven and fewer occurring transactions; eight to eleven transactions; and twelve to eighteen transactions.
Interobserver agreement was sought in the coding of unfolding transactions; it was assumed that errors in coding might occur more frequently when more activities were occurring, thus this division.

Independent observer A was telephoned and asked to randomly choose three sets of three numbers which were counted down the rank-ordered list of 576 quarter hour periods. The choice of these nine quarter hour observation periods (2 hours, 15 minutes of clock time) in which transactions ranged from 2 to 12 (66 in all) became the pool for determining coding agreement.

All three independent observers were naive to the observation setting and so a fifteen minute training session preceeded the videotape viewing. Observers were familiarized with the features of the circulation desk as well as the nomenclature used by this researcher to code activities. When the three observers were settled and prepared, the several videotapes containing the randomly selected quarter hour observation periods were played. The researcher was nearby in cases where nomenclature needed clarification.

Interobserver agreement was calculated on the basis of a widely used formula in which number of agreements is divided by number of agreements plus the number of disagreements. This figure is then multiplied by 100 to
achieve a percentage. (Hersen and Barlow, 1976; Johnston and Pennybacker, 1980; Tawney and East, 1984).

Table 2, below, shows the degree of agreement this procedure revealed. Discussion with the observers after the coding revealed that some of the discrepancies between their coding and this researcher's occurred because they could not differentiate some of the unfolding activities. Setting cues, such as where people arrived at the counter for service, were not meaningful to them. The ratings were nonetheless deemed valuable and the level of agreement sufficient for this study.

**Meaningful Subject Categorization of Interview Transcripts**

A second area of interobserver agreement was sought in consideration of the subject categorization to which the transcribed interviews were treated. In the study these categories were the basis for identifying cultural domains.

A list of 104 included terms emerged in the development of a computer data base of contextualized included terms which appeared in typed transcripts with student assistants (Appendix E). Observer one and Observer three were each asked to provide eight random
Table 2

Number of Agreements and Disagreements Between Researcher and Observers for Activity Codes in Three Activity Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Range</th>
<th>Agreements</th>
<th>Disagreements</th>
<th>Interobserver Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- B</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- C</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- A</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- B</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- C</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- A</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- B</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- C</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Formula for interobserver agreement

\[
\text{Number of Agreements} \div \text{Number of Agreements + Number of Disagreements}
\]
numbers. The two lists of numbers were placed side by side in the order they had been given and were subtracted to yield a third set of numbers. The subtraction of one set yielded the same number as had been supplied by one of the observer, it was dropped, leaving twenty-three numbers.

The twenty-three numbers were then counted down in order of included terms which appeared in the list of 104. Two or three included terms embedded in their transcript context were selected for each of these categories and were placed on separate 3 x 5 index cards.

Three groups of contextualized included terms were assembled. A small slip of paper with the included terms used for each group was attached to the group of cards.

The three independent observers participated in this process. They were instructed that the headings given to them with each group of cards may have been used more than once. They were asked to first number the deck of 3 x 5 cards then place the number of the card next to the appropriate included term on the slip of papers attached to the deck. When they finished they passed the cards to the next person, who used the numbers the first observer had attached, and so
completed coding all three decks.

Interobserver agreements found with this procedure are shown in Table 3. Disagreements discovered in this procedure stemmed primarily from the association of the observers with broader categories, while the researcher had chosen narrower ones. For example, all three observers chose the excerpt pertaining to the use of the card catalog in two places; under "card catalog" and "public service definition." Almost all the disagreements seen in this procedure arose from multiple coding, agreeing with the researcher on the code he attached, but using the code again. This could have been prevented, perhaps, by forcing the assignment of only one code to each excerpt.

**Adequacy of Field Note Codes**

Samples of 257 pages of field notes were given to the independent observers who were then asked to assess them for their subject content as to the activities they recorded. The intent here was to ascertain whether the field note process had captured a sufficient amount of detail to make these an adequate source of information in response to the research questions.

The field notes which had been prepared from the videotapes had been typed on a word processor. Each
Table 3
Number of Agreements and Disagreements Between Researcher and Observers for Included Terms in Interview Transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included Interobserver Group #</th>
<th>Agreements</th>
<th>Disagreements</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Formula for interobserver agreement

\[
\text{Interobserver Agreement} = \frac{\text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Number of Agreements} + \text{Number of Disagreements}}
\]

individual service encounter recorded during the week in the field notes was blocked and stored on a computer disk. Each individual encounter, as described in the field notes, was then typed on a separate piece of paper.

Independent Observer Three participated in this procedure. Ten separate service encounter types were randomly selected by the observer. The typed sheets containing the field note extract had been placed into two three-inch ring binders. Five examples of each of the ten service encounter types were chosen at random by the observer.
The researcher shuffled the fifty sheets of paper and read the description aloud. The observer was then asked to identify the service encounter type. The results of this procedure are shown in Table 4.

Agreement was once more calculated on the same basis as with checks on videotaping and interview transcript processing. This procedure occurred following the previous two described above and by this time the observer had already gained some familiarity with aspects of service encounters in this setting. Agreement was relatively high.

Reactivity to Recording Instrument

Observational research implies the presence of both the observed and the observer. Careful note was taken of every verbal and non-verbal action which indicated specific reaction to the tripod mounted camcorder. Thirty-six instances of reactivity ranging from a wave at the camera by passers-by to a humorous solemn bow in the direction of the camera by a Japanese student (who, as he bowed with palms held together, accidentally dropped the contents his book bag which he sheepishly retrieved).

Among the reactions were eleven direct questions about the camera's purpose, which were answered directly
Table 4
Number of Agreements and Disagreements
Between Researcher and Observer Three
In Identifying Service Encounter Types in
Field Notes from Videotapes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group #</th>
<th>Agreements</th>
<th>Disagreements</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Formula for interobserver agreement

Number of Agreements
Number of Agreements + Number of Disagreements
by the nearby librarian or student assistant.

While reactions of some sort continued on throughout the observation period, compared with what had been seen on other, non-recorded occasions, the business-like activity the camera recorded did not appear to be inhibited by its presence.

SUMMARY

This chapter has endeavored to describe the ways in which this study was conceived, designed, and ultimately carried out to produce both reliable and useful findings concerning the cultural aspects of the interaction between student assistants and library users. The foregoing discussion outlines a process, not a formula, for the investigation of these actors in this setting. Other researchers examining an environment like this one may choose to focus on other elements.

This study has remained close to the data collected through observation, interview, and documentary means. Grounded in these sources, it has avoided making highly inferential claims concerning the environment under investigation. The lens of inquiry directed by this study did not exhaust the possibilities for discovery here. The same data collected and analyzed for this study may well provide useful insights for others'
different questions. Given the complex and complicated nature of human environments, that is quite natural. In fact, Patton (1980), while discussing qualitative research projects suggests that the test of their adequacy lies not in their replication by different researchers, but in basically compatible findings that multiple perspectives on the same set of data bring. In Chapter V I shall mention some of the additional perspectives on this environment which might be employed to amplify these findings.

The following chapter shall display the findings revealed by the methodologies set down in this chapter.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Three major research questions emerged as this study sought to discover the nature of the provision of public services by student assistants in a small college library:

What is the nature of the service environment of the library within which student assistant activities are embedded?

What is the nature of the social structure of the public service activities in which the student assistants are involved? (What are the normative requirements for conduct which influence the provision of service by student assistants?)

What is the nature of those factors external to the immediate service setting (the circulation counter) which impact upon the provision of public service by library student assistants?

Chapter III explained the procedures used in this study to collect the appropriate data necessary to explore these questions. That chapter showed the analytical procedures used to generate findings, and it discussed the reliability of the collected data.

The present chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the findings analytical procedures revealed. For the
purpose of organization and coherence, findings will be discussed under each of the sub-questions derived from the three listed above. Each sub-question will be restated, the analytical processes used to investigate them will be briefly summarized, and the findings will be presented.

This study depended on both observational and non-observational data sources to provide an understanding of the complexity of the phenomena of interest. The format of presentation here includes both quantitative-enumerative and qualitative-descriptive components to place these findings in the broader context of ordinariness to the setting. So, the reader will find here a combination of quotations and paraphrasings from fieldnotes and interviews as well as absolute counts of observed behaviors recorded during 144 hours of videotaping.

The wider implications of these findings will be taken up in Chapter V.

FINDINGS FOR

QUESTION 1.1 AND QUESTION 1.2

1.1. What is the observed and reported range of public service encounters in which student assistants participate?
1.2. In what manner are public service encounters defined and understood?

This sub-question was divided into two parts:

1.2.1. How are public service encounters defined and understood by the library users who initiate them?

1.2.2. How are public service encounters defined and understood by student assistants who respond to them?

Question 1.1 and Question 1.2 sought to discover what service encounters were observed in this setting, as well as what was reported by key informants. An analysis protocol suggested by Spradley (1980) was conducted using 400 pages of detailed transaction summaries (covering 144 hours of videotapes, revealing over 4,000 transactions), 334 typed pages of transcripts of interviews with student assistants, 330 typed pages of transcripts of interviews with non-student assistants, and twenty-five typed pages of student self-descriptions. (The manner in which these sources were
manipulated to facilitate content access was described in Chapter III).

Levels of Analysis

Specific details concerning the analytical procedures used here have been previously discussed in Chapter III. The following paragraphs will briefly remind the reader of those processes and then discuss what was found.

Domain Analysis

Briefly, the above source material was submitted to a domain analysis designed to identify the variety of service encounters in which student assistants participate. The domain analysis employed the cover term "service encounter activity" (akin to Spradley's social situation category "activity"), and the relationship of strict inclusion (X is a kind of service encounter activity).

The domain analysis uncovered 160 activities. In addition to checking in and out books, reserve items, and periodicals, there were reported/observed service encounters which included providing information, paging library users, and simply "just being there". The alphabetical list of categories which were revealed
through the domain analysis is listed in Appendix I.

**Taxonomic Analysis**

The domain analysis mentioned above resulted in a list of 160 included terms which were related in some way to the students assistants' tasks as service providers in this setting. The development of a taxonomy involved trying to assemble related aspects of those included terms by finding stages, gradations, and/or relationships within them which would suggest broader, more encompassing domain terms, but all of which could be subsumed under the category "service encounter activity."

**The Development of the Taxonomic Structure**

An example of this process may be seen in the emergence of a category to account for the included term "just being there," a folk term which one student assistant mentioned as being a kind of service encounter activity. Now "just being there" (rendered as "presence") is a condition which was observed when students assistants were within camera range. Potentially devoid of any overt behavior, it is an aspect of student assistants' participation which was nevertheless mentioned in the course of interviews by
both student assistants and non-assistants alike.

The list of other included terms was searched to discover whether other included terms had similar characteristics. One did. Student assistants described themselves as "go-betweens" for library patrons and librarians. Like "just being there," this term suggested a presence, but slightly more active. A broader term of intangible personal service was devised to describe the aspects of these two included terms.

The list of included terms revealed through this process were systematically compared and organized around common features. The meaningful subsets of activities resulted in seven main categories and fourteen sub-categories. They are listed in Figure 4.

Componential Analysis

Three major dimensions of contrast across the domains of service encounters were explored in a componential analysis. They emerged from a consideration of the contrasting features found among and between the domains identified in the taxonomic analysis.

Each of the taxonomic domains were scrutinized and contrasted with questions such as "how?" and "in what manner?" These questions resulted in a focus on three
A. Personal Service to Library Users
   1. Intangible services
   2. Tangible services

B. Active Assistance (Physically Aiding)
   1. Equipment use demonstrations
   2. Help patrons find things

C. Information Delivery
   1. Directional questions
   2. Library information
   3. Reference questions

D. Materials Processing (Type I--Items Brought to Desk by Patrons)
   1. Outgoing (leaving the library)
   2. Incoming (returning to the library)

E. Materials Processing (Type II--Items Retrieved and Delivered by Student Assistants to Patrons)
   1. Change
   2. Closed reserve retrieval/check out

G. Rule Enforcement
   1. Fines
   2. Food and drink
   3. Security
      a. Building
      b. Library material

H. Technological-Mechanical

---

**Figure 4**

Taxonomic Outline of Kinds of Service Encounters
dimensions of contrast, namely:

- Receives Immediate Attention
- Initiated Verbally/Nonverbally
- Oriented Internally/Externally

These dimensions will be elaborated upon in the conclusion of this section.

**Service Encounter Taxonomy Categories**

Findings which emerged from the foregoing analytical procedures are described below. Each of the fourteen sub-categories clustered around the seven major categories of the taxonomy will be described below.

**Personal Service—Intangible Services**

Personal services provided by student assistants have been divided into two major domains, those of an intangible, and those of a tangible nature (Figure 5). Intangible services in this taxonomy cannot be considered active encounters, but they have undoubted potency in the service setting. This sub-category has been subdivided further into two manifestations of intangible personal service.

**Presence.** Presence and availability are obvious preconditions for service encounters. A non-assistant
informant captured the essence of this category when she revealed her perceptions of the staffing of the library's main circulation desk:

Julie: I was coming from downstairs, but I was going to go out. And I didn't necessarily have to check anything out but, I, I don't know, it was kind of a silly thing, but, I just wanted somebody to be there, maybe to say hello as I walked out or something. And, and the other day, maybe I came in and I thought at first there wasn't anybody there, it turns out there was, but, I like to know there's somebody there that I can talk to or be silly with or, I don't know, I just kind of like that.

The essence of this readiness to assist approaching patrons was also mentioned by the student assistants who cited the importance of "being there," "hearing people out," "making library users feel comfortable," and "talking to students". From their point of view, this pre-encounter state was a natural one for student assistants:

Alicia: Just when anybody comes to the desk, you're there, you're there for public service. I mean that's why you're sitting there, or doing whatever. And you give up whatever you're doing to help that person. And they know that you're going to be there if they need something.

Put another way, Karen, one of the student assistants declared simply:

I think it, it's helpful, sometimes, for students to see other students working. Sometimes that's, that's less, maybe intimidating to a freshman who is coming in, needing to find some material. I think it might be less intimidating, especially the first part of your freshman year. Maybe as student workers that's one of our purposes.
Figure 5
Domains of Personal Service Encounters
Wener (1986) discusses the issue of disorientation in public places as it applies to service encounters. Student assistants at their post behind the circulation counter in this setting seem to provide, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with the library, what he terms "setting legibility," a ready source of assistance if it is required.

**Liaison.** The second intangible category of personal service was more explicitly revealed in interviews with both student assistants and student library users. Some report that student assistants serve as a "bridge," or a "go-between," linking library users and the professional librarians. One of the student assistants, Juanita, explained:

> Um, but they [students] feel more comfortable about coming up to me and asking me a question. I think a lot of people are intimidated by librarians because sometimes they've experienced in the past--in the past librarians have looked down on people for not knowing things.

The strategies and motives reported by non-assistant informants as to how student assistants were used as liaisons varied, but Julie, a senior, suggested:

> [Student assistants] They're kind of a buffer zone or a, uh, a level of approachability, so that if you have a question and you're new to the library, you can ask a student and not feel, however you feel, uncomfortable approaching a professional. And
then they lead you to the professional, and then you—the connection is made. So I think that's helpful.

Alicia reiterated this same conviction of her role:

They're glad that you're here, usually. Because they know they can come up and ask you any kind of questions and you should be able to help them, or say 'Ask him (the professional librarian), he won't laugh at you or anything.'

There is considerable folk knowledge in professional librarianship regarding the reluctance of library users to approach a professional librarian for assistance. In this study, interviewed non-assistant informants were asked to compare their experiences at other libraries (usually limited to only one or two public libraries) to their experience at this one. One of the self-supplied criteria they all used for evaluating other libraries was how comfortable they felt with the professional staff. Each of them lauded their college library for being a student-oriented or (some said) dominated place where they felt at home.

One of the few qualitative research studies to be found in the professional library literature is one by Mellon (1986) which sought to create a grounded theory of library anxiety. Working with a group of college English professors, she analyzed the journal entries of some 7,000 students over a two year period and discovered that 75 to 85 per cent of them described
their encounters with libraries and librarians as "scary, overpowering, lost, helpless, and confused" (p. 162). This research suggests that a friendly, inviting, presence, while not an encounter per se, may be an important ingredient in the library public service enterprise.

**Sources of evidence.** The main source of data for the sub-category of intangible personal service emerged from the in-depth interviews with students (assistants and non-assistants). In the observational data (videotapes) the category "friendly conversation" was employed to mark episodes whose duration appeared to exceed the requirements of the service requested, that is, conversation which generally continued after the requested reserve item was delivered, the book checked out, the fine paid, etc. This coding convention followed a characterization that task-related dialogue dominates service encounters (Czepiel, 1985).

We can, however, infer, at least in some cases, that a welcoming, orienting goal is being achieved, even if it appears such exchanges are non-essential to the accomplishment of a specific task. Whatever their exact motives, student assistants engaging in a reasonable amount of such discourse might well be seen as serving
as agents for reducing other students' apprehension about the setting.

The types and frequencies of "friendly conversations," as possible manifestations of intangible personal services, are shown below, in Table 5. Interestingly, those individuals who engaged student workers in friendly conversations were evenly split by gender, but when two or more persons converged to participate in non-essential conversations, they were either all females or males and females; all male groups were not observed in conversations with the assistants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies of Friendly Conversations During Observation Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied patrons</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrons with companions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All females</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All males</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed groups</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Service—Tangible Services**

While the intangible personal services are difficult to assess, tangible personal services pose no such problem. This sub-category emerged to account for those domains of service encounters which were set apart
from the retrieval or processing of library materials and services per se. This sub-category was further subdivided into the following parts.

**Communications/delivery.** Some observed and reported service encounters clustered around what can be described as a European-model of postal service; they contained both the elements of delivery and communications services.

These domains of tangible personal service included recording messages for delivery within the library, holding items behind the desk or under the counter for a library user, paging library patrons, and very occasionally, allowing the use of the library telephone (a public telephone was located elsewhere in the library).

**Loaning of items.** An exploration of domains involving loaning/borrowing revealed there are two basic categories. The first is a category of loans by library personnel where there is no expectation of return. The "loan" of a paper clip or a piece of cellophane tape is not a loan; it is an outright gift.

The other type of loan occurs when there is usually an explicit expectation of return. Items
loaned which fall into this category include small tool-like devices such as: hole punch, scissors, and staplers. Other items which occur in this category include writing instruments, correction fluid to remedy typographical errors, and the campus student directory. With the exception of writing instruments and correction fluid, this loan type could often be distinguished by use in the immediate locus, usually directly on top of, the counter space.

Sometimes the return of such items is unambiguously signalled as in the following exchange:

Male Patron:  Do you have a student directory?
Colleen:  Yeah, you have to use it at the desk.
Male Patron:  Okay.
Colleen:  Okay.

[Walks to Circulation Supervisor's Office, brings out directory, hands it to patron who looks at it for a moment, returns it to her, and leaves].

Lost and found. Consideration of this minor service encounter domain in interviews with student assistants uncovered one particular incident where the "lost" was a child who had misunderstood his mother's instructions and had wandered into the second floor of the library. The child, a rare participant-type in this setting, was reportedly located without delay.
Sources of evidence. The tangible personal service domains described above were located in both the observational and non-observational sources. A summary of the types and frequencies observed in 144 hours of videotapes is shown below in Table 6.

Active Assistance

In the earlier discussion of intangible personal service in this taxonomy of service encounter domains, it was suggested that the simple presence of student assistants might have significance, even benefit, for orienting library users in this environment. The active

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Observed Tangible Personal Services in Observational Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications/Delivery</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paging</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick up.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loans</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No return expected</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No return expected (patron migrates)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No return expected (multiple patrons)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No return expected and Change</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return expected</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Unfilled purchase requests]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lost and Found</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests for lost items</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
assistance category (Figure 6) builds on that notion that student assistants provide orientation in the setting, except that this category specifies two active manifestations of orientations: demonstrations of equipment, and direct assistance in helping patrons find things.

Neither of these sub-categories should be seen as composed of one-sided, waiting-on-customer domains. Both of them are responses to library users already involved in an active, deliberate enterprise which requires the student assistants' technical skills or familiarity to continue.

**Active Assistance—Equipment Use Demonstrations**

The equipment available for public use in this studied library were the photocopy machines, the microfilm and microfiche readers, and the microfilm and microfiche reader printers. Student assistants observed on duty at the main circulation desk usually assist the public in demonstrations of ordinary copier machine functions as well as copy reductions and enlargements, and the use of oversize papers.

The student assistants interviewed acknowledged their own strategies for coping with the copier machines.
Figure 6
Domains of Active Assistance
(Physically Aiding) Service Encounters
You’ve got to get familiar with them (library equipment) especially the copier, when the patron wants to reduce or enlarge.

[It] took me a long time to, to learn how to use all its functions and things. But nothing else. It’s pretty self-explanatory.

They’re cantankerous and none of them like me...I dislike them 'cause I always have to call someone.

Elsewhere in the library, microfilm and microfiche readers and reader-printers are tended by student assistants from time to time. Their assistance to library users occasioned one interviewed non-assistant to remark:

Philip: Uh, the machines upstairs are just like, I don’t know, they just look totally Japanese to me. Or maybe they could be Japanese, I don’t know.

Int: Yeah.

Philip: And so, I remember a couple of times where I did ask a student assistant and, about half of them knew what they were doing, about the other half didn’t.

Int: Um hum.

Philip: Maybe it’s just, I just happened to pick the wrong days to ask them. I don’t know, but, nine times, well, five times out of ten I'd be up there and they'd be up there longer than I would have. Trying to figure it out. Because I'd go: 'Well, I can't figure this out, I'll just go get a student."

Int: What does that do, when you, when you encounter a situation like that, what, what’s your reaction to that situation?
Philip: Oh, well, it, it makes me do what I do now, go right to the librarian and just skip right over the student assistant.

Philip's sentiment is echoed by Ted, another interviewed non-student assistant, in this regard:

...If it's something like...machines, if something's wrong with the machines, I'll just kind of bypass them [student assistants] now, I know they probably don't have the knowledgeability to answer the questions, so I'll just, you know, save some time, save us both some time, and just go ask someone else.

What both of these non-assistant informants reveal is that their inclination was to first seek the help of student assistants to deal with their problem. Finding this help inadequate for their needs, however, they indicate their solution: they find someone else in the library (the professionals) who are more likely to help them.

Student assistants are usually hired with little previous work experience when they arrive at the library. From such comments as those expressed by library users, the student assistants studied in this setting were expected, but not always fully prepared, to serve the public in this area.

Sources of evidence. The observational data contained only instances where the first floor copier features were demonstrated to the public. Twenty-five
instances were found in the 144 hours of videotapes.

**Active Assistance--Helping Patrons Find Things**

The second aspect of active assistance in this taxonomy of service encounter domains involves a direct involvement in helping patrons find materials in the library. In this domain, student assistants are involved in a physical hunt, rather than an intellectual process of evaluating what materials would be best suited for a patron's purposes.

Student assistants in this setting who were interviewed indicated these kinds of activities gave them considerable personal satisfaction. Proficiency in this area, however, came from their close work with materials. One student recounted:

**Alicia:** I mean, just like religion, you know that's going to be the Bs or the BSs, it's just there. And you just know exactly where to look for something.

**Int:** Because you've actually used--

**Alicia:** Either had to use the books or this summer with shifting. I mean, you know what books are where!

**Int:** Yes! Yeah.

**Alicia:** But, um, I guess it's just from, when people would come up the first year or so. And ask me where things are, and I'd just sort of look over my shoulder at the librarian and she'd say where it was.

**Int:** Um hum.
Alicia: You just pick it up.

Allen, another interviewed student assistant, viewed this manner of knowledge acquisition in a more aggressive way: "It's just, like I said, you just, when someone asks something to do know what it is, you know, you send 'em to the librarian. But you find out what that thing was, so that next time you can point them to it."

The locational knowledge which student assistants acquire over the course of their employment in the library is recognized by their non-assistant peers. Speaking of a friend of hers who worked in the library, Julie reported:

I mean, my gosh, Karen has told me all these books that she knows, and it sort of, I, it really impresses me. That she can just say, 'Oh well, the', oh gosh, I don't even know what, 'the QAs or whatever, or the women's studies section is over there.' And she knows what the call numbers are, what the subject is that goes with them, and exactly where they are on the shelves. And that really does impress me.

Students (non-assistants) interviewed who use the library frequently noted that tenure on the job has a direct bearing on student assistant's ability to be oriented in the library. Philip declared:

Um, well, since I'm a senior, I've gone through a lot of library assistants, and any library assistant I see that's worked there more than one usually is usually very helpful...Anyone that I've never seen work here before, or not very much,
usually, is not very helpful....I realize it's not their fault, they just haven't been here long enough to uh, figure out where they are.

The student assistants themselves insisted that a crucial element of working in the library involved acquiring this sense of place. Linda related that she learned where things are by using the library. She noted significantly: "You can't very well work here without using it, actually know what's there for people to use."

Sources of evidence. This domain was scattered in interview references with the student assistants and non-students alike. It appeared in categories previously identified as "student assistants' perception of job," "training," and "what a student assistant must know."

In the videotapes, the longest single service encounter (of 4,010 recorded), 10 minutes, was occasioned by a student who was unable to locate a play in the stacks. The encounter involved a thorough checking of circulation records, the card catalog, the shelf list and ultimately, the physical act (off camera) of checking the stacks, unfortunately with a negative result. Generally, assisting patrons find things was a category subsumed under a less specific "library
information" category. Sixty-six instances were found in the videotapes.

**Information Delivery**

We now turn to domains of service encounters which are numerously represented in both observational and non-observational sources (Figure 7). Two of the three subcategories of information delivery listed below occupy places in a second tier of frequently occurring service encounters which were recorded in this study.

Information delivery here is distinguished from earlier categories of service encounter in that the information sought at this level requires active participation on the part of the student assistant (distinguishing it from an intangible service), is related more to a sharing of knowledge of library systems and than personal service, is a step beyond orientation, and required a deeper grasp of library knowledge than that of location.

Katz (1978, p. 11) divides the delivery of information by library personnel into four question types:

- **Directional Questions**—A general information or directional question which is of the information booth variety...rarely requires more than a geographical knowledge of key locations.
Ready-Reference Questions--A data-type query which usually required a single, usually uncomplicated answer. Answers normally located in less than a minute through standard reference works such as almanacs, encyclopedias, etc.

Specific Search Questions--Larger amount of material required distinguishes them from Ready Reference questions. Typical short term paper assistance.

Research Questions--Characteristically submitted by a specialist seeking detailed information to support a specific project. The complete library as well as outside sources are employed to respond.

The distinctions between these definitions and the ones used in this study will be made clear in the discussion below.

Directional questions. During the observation phase of this study, 149 directional questions were recorded during 144 hours of videotaping. The use of this descriptive term closely parallels Katz' category of the same name. These questions were basically geographical in nature. Patrons sought the location of the periodical collection, the xerox machine, the campus phone, the nearest mailbox, and the rest rooms.

These questions are basically straightforward and, among those which were recorded on videotape, answered with ease. In his written self-description of his activities as a student assistant Allen wrote:
Figure 7
Domains of Information Delivery
Often at the first floor desk, the student will be asked to direct a patron to a certain section of books. The patron will have a list written down from the card catalog. Fortunately, having worked in the library for three years, and having done a great deal of shelving, I can often direct the patron to the specific shelf that the books will be located on. Most people are thankful for this. Some people don't feel a vague gesture and saying "middle of the second floor on that side" is very helpful, so I try to be as specific as I can.

The student assistants interviewed recognized the modest level of sophistication that directional questions engender, and usually how much further they can go. Karen asserted:

Um, basically I work at the desk, I can answer simple questions. I don't have a lot of the, the knowledge that the librarians do. If a person wants to know where they can find a certain call number, I can tell them that. Or how to use the card catalog. Some of the more general reference books I'm familiar with. And the periodical reference books. If it's a more extensive question, because there are a lot of reference material and reference books, if it's an extensive question, I usually just refer them to the librarian on duty.

In conversations with student assistants and in observations, there is a threshold at which the patron's question moves from the realm of ordinary geographical directions to something more complicated. At this point, student assistants are put to the test of their own experience and knowledge. Just before the videotaping commenced for this study, students had been issued a memorandum which specified the limits of their approved involvement (Appendix I).
Despite explicit instructions to the contrary, however, John, in his student assistant self-description wrote: "We answer questions if we can. If not, we refer the person to a full-time staff member. I try to answer any question I can, even reference, though we're not supposed to."

Alicia described her determination to answer questions beyond the directional ones:

Alicia: And...you answer...the questions when the librarian's not around.

Int: Yes?

Alicia: Or, if you know them [the questions], that's the best way, knowing them without having to ask a librarian.

Int: What do you think about that. Ah, some of the students I've talked to have different, differing feelings about answering a question if they know it and they--

Alicia: If I know it, I might as well answer it. Why pass the buck if I can given an answer as to where to find something?

Int: Okay. Has that ever gotten you in trouble?

Alicia: Not yet!

The issue of going further than permitted elicited one other dimension in interviews with student assistants which suggested a role conflict between the student assistants and the professional librarians. This view is exemplified in the following exchange:
Nancy: ...Sometimes I guess I feel that I'm just as qualified to answer the question.

Int: Um hum.

Nancy: And I know it's not my place to. Or that I should allow them to do, to do it. And that's...I've had problems with that before.

Int: How do you mean? Before?

Nancy: Um, like sometimes, um, people come up and ask me a reference question, you know. We're supposed to refer them to a librarian--- I answer the questions! And a lot of times I get in trouble for doing it because the librarians think, 'Well, you know, that's my job.'

Int: What, uh, how would you look at a situation if you knew the answer and the reference librarian or the person at the desk---

Nancy: I've had that happen a lot.

[A few questions later, she offers her personal assessment of the situation]:

I think it is an embarrassment to the librarian at times when the students can answer those questions, but I don't think it should be.

**Library information.** The second kind of question this study uncovered which is received by student assistants regards specific information about policies and procedures. Ninety-five such questions were recorded the 144 hours of videotaping. They cover such topics such as how the open and closed reserve systems operate in the library; who has an item checked out, how does a non-student borrow a book from the library, will
the library security system erase magnetic tapes and so forth. These questions were distinguished from regular directional questions because they relate to library-specific policies. The student responding to questions such as these becomes an agent of the library.

Information questions posed by library users sometimes required that students be able to distinguish between regular questions and those involved divulging what might be called confidential information. A policy to protect the privacy of student borrowers was adopted shortly before the observation period commenced. Student assistants were instructed not to reveal the identity of persons who had reserves or books out. Even so, some students had difficulty with this. In one observed service encounter, a student assistant told a patron who had checked out a book. After the patron left, the nearby professional librarian instructed the assistant: "You’re not supposed to do that."

No specific issues concerning this class of question were mentioned by any of the interviewed student assistants.

Reference questions. In this study, no questions as sophisticated as Katz’ fourth category of information inquiries (research questions) were recorded. The
category of reference question used in this study was a combination of his second and third types—ready-reference and specific search questions. A total of 140 such questions were recorded during the 144 hours of recorded observations.

Despite what some student assistants stated in regard to their readiness and desire to answer reference questions (regardless of the explicit rule not to) one assistant admitted:

That is one problem I have here at the library. A lot of the time when a patron asks a question, I have no idea how to answer it. I feel helpless and alone. Then I say, 'Let me find a librarian to answer that for you.' I got used to not knowing a lot of answers, but I also got good at answering questions about the bathroom, drinking fountain, and library hours.

Interviews with non-assistant students who frequently used the library sought to reveal other dimensions of the student assistant's participation in answering reference questions. Philip, whose interview was drawn from earlier, had very definite ideas about student assistants and higher level informational requests.

Int: Well, tell me about some of the needs that you have and that you ask for when you're at the desk here.

Philip: Well, since I go to the library a lot, I usually know where everything is that I need to personally get, so if I have a
question, it's usually going to be a very hard one.

Int. Yeah.

Philip: That someone, and usually, any question I have, you know, I'll just skip the student assistant and try to find the first librarian that I see.

Int. Okay.

Philip: You know, because usually, a very specific question on very specific topics, and I just want to know how to get to that place as fast as I can.

Int. Right.

Philip: You know, and I, several times I've gone, "Okay, I'll go to a student assistant." And they say, "Well, have you checked the card catalog?"

Int. Um hum.

Philip: OF COURSE [spoken with emphasis] I've checked the card catalog [both laugh], I wouldn't be over here! And it's kind of stuff like that. Because there's a lot of different references in the library that I have no idea about.

Int. Sure.

Philip: That only a librarian would know.

[later, he added to this, speaking of his circle of friends and associates who were also pre-med students]

And so a lot of times they have usually the same view: 'We need to get into this place, get what we need, and start studying right away.

Int. So, you know, usually, they have no problems jumping right over the student assistants either.
There are discrepancies in what student assistants say they want to give, and what some library patrons expect, in terms of service, from student assistants and other library personnel. Philip indicated that as a freshman and a sophomore he was more likely to use student assistants because his needs were not so sophisticated. This sentiment was also seen in a remark by Allen who said:

Um, it's a difference if, if there's a problem, like before, um, as a freshman, if there's a problem, I—in the library or something—I'd go directly to them [student assistants] and say, "Uh, I'm having trouble with this, it's probably stupid, but, you know, how do you do this?" But now it's like I want to go to someone higher up.

So the assistance sought by some library patrons from student assistants may diminish as library patrons advance through their academic programs.

**Discrimination of user needs.** The delivery of useful information was acknowledged by student assistants and library users alike as an important aspect of the student assistant function. Philip's remark above, expressing what seems to be incredulity that he would be directed toward the card catalog differs sharply and significantly, from what student assistants say. Allen, for example, remarked: "Some people, it surprises them when you tell them: 'Did you
check the card catalog? They don't realize why it's there."

Although the card catalog is a proper place to begin many searches for information in a library, comments such as Philip's suggest that some well-meaning student assistants may not always be able to distinguish what constitutes a simple request for basic information, and what is legitimately an in-depth reference question, requiring a familiarity with library materials beyond their ken.

**Materials Processing, Type I**

As a central location where materials are processed for removal from the library, it is hardly surprising that materials processing dominates the work flow of student assistants assigned to the library's main desk. The taxonomy of service encounters which emerged from the observational data clearly indicated that materials processing was of two separate characters.

Type I, (Figure 8) which is discussed here, involved the processing of library materials which library patrons have delivered to the student assistant on duty. In this aspect of work, student assistants behave very much like supermarket checkout clerks. The procedures are basically routine and mechanical,
Figure 8
Domains of Materials Processing - Type I
(Solely Patron Initiated)
requiring skill and accuracy, to be sure, but as observation revealed, this dominant portion of student assistant responsibilities is often transacted in silence or with a minimum of discourse.

Type I processing may be further subdivided into two parts, those encounters which involve the student assistant in a gatekeeping role, processing materials in such a way as to allow them out of the library, while other encounters are constituted around receiving materials which have been previously checked out.

During the observational period, of the 4,010 service activities observed, a total of 1,486 (37% of all those observed) belonged to this Materials Processing Type I category. Included in this category of service encounter were the following behaviors, listed below in Table 7, with their individual frequencies.

The missing patron. Included here are encounters which sometimes provide a brief contact between student assistants and library users, but very frequently, only a trace of the patron is to be seen. Over nine hundred instances of behavior were observed in which student assistants responded in some way to the return of materials on the counter top. Often times returned
Table 7
Observed Frequencies of Materials Processing
(Type I) Encounters

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<tr>
<td><strong>Outgoing</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>524</td>
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<tr>
<td>Periodical check out</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>Open reserve check out</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incoming</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Book return</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Reserve return</td>
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items were only left without any uttered words at all. Nonetheless, student assistants were obliged to respond to these patron initiated acts. Student assistants' manifested responsiveness was their processing of materials and returning them to the shelf (reserve materials) or sorting cart (regular circulating materials).

Non-observational data. Certain student assistants noted their personal handling of transactions of this nature. Alicia, for example revealed:

I watch how the other people check out books and I don't know how they could do it, 'cause it seems so slow. I figure the people that come to the desk, or ask their question, want to get going and do whatever they have to do. I mean, when I check out a book, I get the card, the date due slip out first, stick it in the thing, get at the other
card, pile the cards next to the desensitizing thing, instead of just setting it aside and waiting. I try to get it speeding along.

Although Alicia later mentioned that her "business first" approach was not as strict when she dealt with friends, she added:

Um, I don't, I don't think I really treat 'em any differently, though, I try to still get them out of there, because I figure they have other stuff to do. 'Cause I usually have other stuff to do. [I] treat them the way I want to be treated.

One of the student assistants who provided an anonymous self-description of the student assistant job offered an incentive for giving prompt assistance: "The check out process is too slow for some students and they let you know." Still, another self-description summed up the nature of these kinds of activities with: "There are many situations that I confront at the desk. One of the most obvious is checking in and out books. Everyone seems to do this well, without problems."

Interviewed non-assistants generally agreed this processing of materials was an essential feature of their interaction with student assistants, and, most student assistants did this well.

Materials Processing, Type II

The first type of materials processing can be viewed as an essentially passive response of student
assistants to library patrons. This second type (Figure 9), however, often involves a negotiation between the library user and the student assistant which is almost never observed with the handling of materials.

Change. In observation phase of this study, 422 of all service encounters recorded (10.5%) were instances where change was provided library users. An unproblematic activity, student assistants' only call for assistance from the professional librarians was a single instance when the paper money in the change

--- Change Provision

--- Materials Processing
--- Type II

--- Closed Reserves

Figure 9
Domains of Materials Processing - Type II
(Partially Negotiated Patron Initiations)
drawer was insufficient to change a large denomination bill.

In this setting, an honor system provided that library users would use the change they received in the copiers. Nancy observed: "Usually they're pretty good about just asking for change for the copy machine, 'cause that's what it's there for."

During this study change was so often dispensed at the same time that reserve items were that when asked what services student assistants were good for, Philip focused on this minor service: "Change!" he responded. "Change for the copier!"

**Closed reserves.** Several hundred items either withdrawn or copied from library holdings or provided by professors from their personal or departmental libraries constituted the closed reserve collection in this setting. During the observational period 1032 instances of this behavior (25.6% of all observed) were recorded. In this realm of service, the combined efforts of student assistants and library users were needed to insure prompt service.

Allen explained what he found necessary to effectively provide service:

Yeah, well, you have to do that, you have to pick up on what the people want. That's why, like, I'm glad I have a good memory so I can remember what's
on closed reserve. So I don’t have to hunt for it, search for it, if they don’t know the name or the author, or the class name. If they say 'I want this' then I know, 'Okay, that’s Integrative Studies 270, that’s an essay,' and I can get that for them.

Allen suggested that dealing with a much requested item was fairly simple. "When the first person comes up...they ask for things...by the time the second or third persons comes up you can deal with them a lot more easily."

The other interviewed student assistants variously reported how they became prepared for dealing with multiple requests. Juanita’s mental preparedness resembled Allen’s: "After once or twice, somebody coming up, you know, we pretty much know people are going to be asking for things, so we usually have them there and ready."

But even if student assistants are prepared to serve the public through memorizing or rearrangement of the reserve collection, all of the student assistants expressed some form of frustration with the failure of library patrons to provide identifying information at the point of request. One of the anonymous self-job descriptions described this process in detail:

The majority of people will come to the desk with the name and author of the material they wish to check out. Usually if they don’t know for sure, they have a syllabus, so it is no problem to check. Some people come to the desk with no idea of the
name of the book, the author, or the class it is under, plus they have no syllabus. When this happens I try to get them to figure out at least what department it is under. Then if they know their instructor's name we can usually figure it out. Sometimes when this happens it seems as if I am never going to find the material. I usually look until I run out of possibilities of where it might be. I then ask the librarian, or sometimes I will have asked the librarian at the beginning and if they didn't recognize the description I would then search myself. Again, most people are polite when they searching process goes on. They realize the reason I have to search is that they did not come with enough information to locate the material.

Karen, another library assistant, described an ideal patron seeking reserve material: "knows course number, specific article or book...'cause a lot of patrons come up [not knowing this] and then...you spend ten minutes hunting down this blue book..."

From the point of view of library patrons, experience and familiarity with the reserve collection were prized among the student assistants. Ted discriminated between the experienced and the inexperienced student assistants as they dealt with reserves.

One that's pretty new [will] go back and say, 'Now what professor is that?' [But experienced assistants] can go back and pick it out real quick, and if they don't have it, you know, they come back and say something, 'it's not here.'

Brian, another non-assistant interviewed who stated nearly all of his library needs were met through heavy use of the reserve collection, explained that he
sometimes had to nudge newer students:

Sometimes with new people I've noticed that come in, like in the middle of the term or something, that I know exactly...where things are at...and I have to kind of direct them...

In fact, during the videotaping, an observed pattern among frequent library users was the patron's precise knowledge of where their requested item was on the closed shelves. Several times on the videotapes a library patron pointed to the exact shelf where the desired item was located.

Interviewed library users had all used and valued the student assistant provision of materials at the counter, but Julie assessed such service without glorification:

I guess I think that...they free up reference librarians and other professionals from having to do the mundane, stupid things, about handing out change, and checking out books. So that they [the professional librarians] can be free to run around the library and holding people by the hand and showing them different resources.

**Rule Enforcement**

The sixth aspect identified in the taxonomy of service encounters is remarkable from the others which have been discussed so far because it involves students calling their peers to account for their behaviors which are not sanctioned by library policies (Figure 10).
Rule Enforcement

--- Fines

--- Food and Drink Prohibitions

--- Building

--- Security

--- Library Materials

Figure 10
Domains of Rule Enforcement
Subtle rule enforcement occurs, of course, when student assistants prepare materials for circulation out of the library. Routinely, student assistants remind the library patron that a reserve item is "due back in two hours" or a book is "due back on the fifteenth," and so forth.

Another kind of rule enforcement observed on the videotapes concerned the library's restriction on revealing the identity of borrowers who checked out books, periodicals, or reserve materials. In the latter category a student assistant was approached by a patron who was not satisfied with a simple negative response. The student assistant referred the insistent patron to a professional librarian, and for nearly five minutes the patron, later joined by two companions, unsuccessfully tried to cajole the professional librarian into making an exception to the rule. Observed or reported by key informants, such incidents were generally rare.

Three more direct aspects of rule enforcement will be considered here, namely in the realm of fines, food and drink prohibitions, and building and library material security.

Fines. Collection of overdue fines was a basic task that student assistants in this setting performed
occasionally, though not frequently. During the observation period twenty-nine encounters were recorded when library patrons paid a fine.

Nancy, one of the student assistants, viewed this domain as routine, but sometimes frustrating:

Nancy: Um. Usually people are pretty open when they bring books in, they'll say that they're overdue. You know, and I'll just collect the fine. But a lot of times people will just leave things and go away (laughs). You know, like, 'Wait a minute!' You know, and they're gone before you get to the books. And that frustrates me because usually it's going to cost them more money.

Int: Right.

Nancy: Because they've left and haven't paid the fine.

Int: Sure.

Nancy: And, you know, it's frustrating to me that I don't see them at the desk, I'm usually busy doing something else. And that they don't wait to be taken care of. They just kind of sneak off, thinking they're going to get away with, get away with it.

All of the student assistants interviewed denied that their friends asked that library fines be forgiven, but one of the non-student assistants, Ted, said:

Well, one time one person [a student assistant] did say, you know, well, if you ever--had something, you know, overdue, you know, give it to me, and I'll be sure, you know, to get it in or something.

No instances of this behavior were observed or reported by the student assistants employed in the
setting, but the interview with Philip produced an unexpected disclosure of the relationship between library patrons and their peers, the student assistants:

Philip: Ah...I had a huge fine on these magazines. And I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but I'm goin' to anyway.

Int: Yeah.

Philip: And uh, it was about, about a six dollar fine--

Int: Um hum.

Philip: 'Cause I had fifteen magazines checked out, and a quarter a day, for every day overdue.

Int: Yeah.

Philip: And so I went, I went specifically to the student. Because I knew a librarian would never go for what I was going to say.

Int: Yes.

Philip: So I went specifically to the student and said, um, 'You know, I was at home all weekend and I really wasn't able to get these magazines back on time.' Which I was.

Int: Um hum.

Philip: 'And is there any way we could get a reduction in this fine, because there's just no way I could get here.'

Int: Um hum.

Philip: 'It was beyond my control.' The car was broke. And she said yes.

Int: Yeah.
Philip: And so I only had to pay for one day instead of two, where—

Int: Well, that's half the price.

Philip: Right, and thinking maybe if I would have gone to the professional, that may not have worked, you know. Because they are professional, that may not have worked. You know, because they are professionals, that is the rule, and that's just the way it goes.

Int: So, in other words, you really did think that, that you would get a better, better assistance from the student assistant in a student to student kind of situation.

Philip: Right.

Int: Okay.

Philip: Right, just maybe because they're students, they kind of understand where we're coming from--

Int: Okay.

Philip: And so that's why, you know, if there were all professionals sitting at the desk, I would have waited, I don't know how many hours! (both laugh) 'Til a student would have come up, and then would have said: 'I've got a question!' You know?

The identity of the student assistant who "went for" Philip's story was not solicited during the interview and was not pursued later on. The incident however, is emblematic of the position in which student assistants are placed when they are expected to carry out library policies which may be personally disagreeable to them, particularly when it penalized a fellow student.
Food and drink prohibitions. Careless library users and assorted insect and other wildlife have resulted in many libraries prohibiting the importation of foodstuffs and drink. The situation was no different in this library.

While no incidents were recorded on the videotapes, interviewed student assistants stated that this rule infringement was usually noticed only after library users had departed, leaving snack bags and soft drink cans on tables or shelves around the library. Nancy, a student assistant, averred:

Um, I've never had any direct confrontations with this [although] I have had a lot of trouble with people who bring in food and drink into the library. I've never had to deal with that, but it really frustrates me that people abuse that.

Building and library material security. Rule enforcement in which student assistants are involved is manifested in one further area, namely in responding to the messages transmitted by the library's two security systems.

The first of these two security systems is rarely invoked. It is the security system which monitors the emergency exits and, during evening hours, the library's back door. Passage through an emergency exit raises the immediate suspicion that the patron has attempted to
evade the book security system. Such events are exceptionally rare and were not recorded during the observation period. Over the course of her 2 1/2 years as a student assistant Alicia recalled only one occurrence of this unauthorized exit from the library. She noted "Once it did [security system engaged] when somebody left by the non-exit, emergency door...You can't do much about it—you can't stop the person...half-way across campus!"

The building security system was, however, was activated on one videotaped evening as the library's cleaning crew attempted to exit the back door of the library without disengaging the system. In that case student assistants deferred to the professional librarians in the building to reset the system.

Allen, a student assistant, referred to such occasions as problematic:

Well, there's times, I remember a couple of times when the alarm in the back has gone off. And when I'm the only one out there and I don't know, you know, what little key to do, what to do. So I'm like: 'Where's the librarian, where's the librarian?!' So that's a problem.

The other type of security system is one which audibly signals the patrons (and everyone else in the library) that a some type of library material (on rare occasions there is a piece of metal which does this) has not bee properly discharged for exit from the library.
Student assistants play an important role in this situation as their lack of attention to detail in checking materials out is largely responsible for the engagement of the security system. Library materials are treated during processing and the live element within them must be disengaged in the process of check out. Karen admitted that "I have to know how to operate the desensitizing machine. I haven't done that a couple of times and the patron has suffered on the way out!"

While some student assistants, like Juanita, allege that "people are always trying to get around it," that view was not shared by her fellow assistants, like Nancy who reported "I haven't had too much trouble with people actually trying to take things...most people are feel so guilty or so embarrassed, you know, like, 'it's happened to me.'"

As with the forgiving of fines, which student assistants may find difficult to resist, Alicia illustrated the tension between serving as an agent of the library, and a peer:

It's hard. Especially if you know the person. You feel so guilty about telling them to stop or wait. Usually they know what, that the fact it's an alarm, and they think, they realize that something wasn't checked out or something.

During the videotaped observation period the book security system was engaged twenty-one times. During
these incidents library users returned to the desk and the error was corrected. None appeared to be deliberately trying to avoid the security system. On one occasion, however, a patron continued through the exit gate, breaking a set pin which was replaced by a professional librarian.

Security in this setting was not of overwhelming concern to the interviewed student assistants and not a source of great anxiety.

Technological-Mechanical Issues

The final item which relates to service encounters in which student assistants and library patrons come together concerns an issue which had been briefly touched on previously with relation to other types of encounters, but it is an issue in itself.

The library environment in which student assistants interact with library patrons contains a variety of mechanical devices which have the potential to break down. Student assistants, particularly if they are unattended by any other library personnel, must immediately cope with equipment failures in some fashion.

During the course of video taping, the main charge machine did, in fact, malfunction in the middle of a
transaction between a library assistant and patron. Neither the student assistant nor the professional librarian on duty at the time was able to repair the charge machine. When questioned about dealing with such a situation, Allen responded optimistically: "I don't know, when these things happen I'm just, 'Oh well, so we stamp them.' It's kind of the way I approach them."

The older copy machines which were owned by the observed library had peculiar mechanical problems from time to time. Some of the assistants coped with these difficulties like Nancy:

I've gotten so I can be working at the desk and hear sounds and I just walk over and bang whatever needs to be done to make it work again.

But others, like Alicia, complained: "Copy machine. It never works! The toner light always comes on and everybody has no idea to fix it, it seems. Except for the people who are constantly over there."

The library's copier machine on the first floor was tended by the student assistants on a fairly regular basis while activities were being videotaped. Sixty-eight instances of various kinds of assistance to either maintain (refill paper or toner) or repair (clear paper jams, etc.) were observed.

Non-assistant views concerning some student assistants' lack of familiarity with microfilm and fiche
equipment have already been noted earlier in this chapter. A reported lack of specific training and preparation to respond to such requests put assistants in a difficult, untenable position when called to do so.

**Componential Analysis**

The domains which were identified during the course of exploration of service encounters in which student assistants and library users were further analyzed through a componential analysis technique. That technique, previously mentioned, sought to identify patterns across domains in several areas.

**Immediate or Delayed Attention**

The first dimension of contrast examined the nature of attention given to patrons in regard to the different domains of service encounters. Upon examination of additional field notes from videotapes produced for this purpose, it was concluded that this setting is, as one would expect, patron-centered. Generally speaking, the observed student assistants immediately attended to the patron at the counter. It is no accident that Alicia mentioned that patrons seeking change for the copy machine kept her hopping on a busy night. The cue of the approaching patron was seen to cut off conversations
between student assistants and friends, and clerical tasks, such as the return of materials to the reserve collection, were delayed until all the patrons at the counter had been served.

The examination of this contrast feature recalled something the student assistant Allen had mentioned in his interview. He described when several patrons appeared at the counter simultaneously he attempted to take care of multiple patrons who needed similar kinds of things (items from reserve, change, etc.).

One further evidence of the potency of this concept of immediate attention may be found in the occasional criticisms expressed by other assistants and patrons of the rare student assistant who did not perform as expected and did not immediately attend to a patron. This rule breaking was seen as a breach of normal activity in this setting.

**Initiated Verbally or Non-Verbally**

The second dimension of contrast looked at service encounters involving student assistants and library patrons from the standpoint of the characteristics of the actual service initiation. This dimension was suggested by one of the characteristics of service encounters proposed by Czepiel (1985), that such
encounters are dominated by task-oriented dialogue.

In this setting, the task is often so specific and so well defined that virtually no talk at all occurs. A patron standing quietly in front of the charge machine, a stack of books with an ID card on top is an occasion which in many cases elicits no talk at all. This contrast dimension, however, indicated that some types of encounters are highly verbal in content. Requests for information and requests for materials on closed reserve, for example, require substantial verbal exchanges.

This contrast category revealed that service encounters of the former type, involving little or no verbal exchange, tend to be smooth flowing, unproblematic ones. The latter type, however, is more likely to include problematic service encounters for student assistants.

Oriented Internally/Externally

The final contrast dimension is partially related to the second dimension. It contrasted the service encounter domains in terms of student assistants and library users' orientation toward the library. Service encounters were seen to be both externally oriented, that is, student assistants responded in ways which sent
the library users out of the library; and internally, when the things student assistants did were accompanied by the patron remaining in the library.

This contrast category illustrated the gatekeeping roles of the students. And gatekeeping generally resulted in discourse as library patrons entered the library and used the assistants for orientation and, in the case of closed reserve materials, to actually obtain something for them. Library patrons on their way out of the library were seen to return reserve materials and check out books with little conversation.

This understanding gained from this contrast category partially accounted for the observed behavior of some personable, outgoing student assistants who freely conversed with strangers at some points, but were strangely reticent with others on their way out.

Summary

The seven aspects of service encounters discussed in this section provide responses to research questions 1.1 and 1.2 which sought to both identify those activities which were observed during the observational period and further, how those activities were defined and understood by both the student assistants and the library users.
It is clear that while some of the activity is routine and, to some, uninteresting, others are engaging, frustrating, even provocative.

The next section will address further aspects of these domains of service encounter as they are considered in terms of patterns over time and in terms of routineness and extraordinariness in the setting.

FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 1.3 AND QUESTION 1.4

Question 1.3 sought to provide answers to the question, "What is the pattern of services provided by student assistants over time?" In a related way, question 1.4 asked, "What is routine and what is extraordinary among the activities in which student assistants participate? These questions recognize what Dabbs (1982, p. 37) wrote as of concern to qualitative research, namely elements which are "patterned or distributed systematically but unevenly across space, time, or other elements." As described in Chapter III, these questions were addressed through a consideration of what was observed and what was reported concerning patterns of activities over time.
Levels of Analysis

The period of recorded observation extended over 36 evenings during a ten week academic quarter. The resulting 144 hours of videotapes were indexed, as described in Chapter III. The handwritten index, which recorded salient details about each service encounter, was later used to produce a data base of information using a dBaseIII computer program. Manipulation of this computer data base made possible the accurate representations of activity described below.

In addition to the observational data, the non-observational data sources were also examined and analyzed for the purpose of gathering perceptions of activity patterns in time.

The result of inquiries into these separate sources of data will be discussed below.

Patterns in the Observational Data

Service encounters which were observed in the 144 hours of videotapes were investigated from a variety of temporal vantage points. Each of these perspectives are presented below.
Quarter Hour Segments

The smallest meaningful temporal unit employed in this study to describe activity patterns was the 15 minute time period. It was chosen after the total number of recorded service encounters had been calculated. The 4,010 transactions appeared over the course of 8,640 minutes, or roughly, an average of a little less than one service encounter every two minutes. It was decided that a smaller unit was not necessary to convey a meaningful grasp of the level of activity in this setting.

Quarter hours across the study. A total of 576 quarter hour units comprise the observation period recorded on videotapes. Figures 11 through 20, below, graphically reveal the number of service encounters recorded in each of the quarter hour units. Upon inspection it will be seen that activity varied widely from one quarter hour to the next, and from day to day. These individual segments, however, provided the means for analysis which revealed broad patterns in these data.
Figure 11
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 1--Days 1-3)
Figure 12
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 2--Days 4-7)
Figure 14
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 4--Days 12-15)
Figure 15
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 5--Days 16-19)
Figure 16
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 6--Days 20-23)
Figure 17
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 7--Days 24-27)
Figure 18
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 8--Days 28-31)
Service Encounters
Observed
May 23, 1988

Service Encounters
Observed
May 24, 1988

Service Encounters
Observed
May 25, 1988

Service Encounters
Observed
May 26, 1988

Figure 19
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 9—Days 32-35)
Service Encounters
Observed
May 31, 1988

Figure 20
Recorded Service Encounters in 15 Minute Periods
(Week 10--Day 36)
**Frequency of encounters through the evening.** The general pattern of frequency of initiated service encounters across the 576 quarter hour segments is displayed in Figure 21. This figure arrays the study's 4,010 recorded service encounters in the sixteen quarter hour segments which made up each evening's collection period. Thus, the aggregate of thirty-six evenings' frequency of service encounters are seen here.

The general pattern revealed is that the frequency of service encounters increased from 6:00 pm to 7:45 pm, leveled off and diminished somewhat until 9:15 pm, then increased to the highest activity levels of the evening through 10:00 pm, when the library closed. Although they did not have the benefit of systematic enumeration of service encounters this study provided, student assistants were familiar with this pattern of activity and spoke about its implications, as will be seen below.

**Density of activity.** A second way to view the data cummulated from the study's detailed observations is by looking at the actual number of service encounters which occurred in the 576 quarter hour segments.

Observed service encounters in quarter hour segments were seen to occur in a range from zero (seven quarter hour segments saw no encounters at all) to
Figure 21
Frequency of Service Encounters Observed in Fifteen Minute Segments During Observation Period
eighteen (three quarter hour segments contained this many service encounters). Figure 22 graphically displays the distribution of the 4,010 recorded service encounters over 19 activity levels (0 to 18 service encounters per quarter hour segment).

Density of activity across these time segments indicates the pace of activity. Overall, the pace of activity seen in this study is relatively unhurried. Sixty-nine percent (405) of the 576 quarter hours segments contained eight or fewer service encounters. Fewer than five percent of quarter hour periods observed contained more than 15 service encounters during a single 15 minute period (more than one encounter per minute).

Levels of activity have important consequences as student assistants are called upon to serve the public. Their own perceptions of this issue will be presented in a moment.

Days of the Week

Key informants suggested there is a cycle of activity which typifies the day of the week. A separate analysis of data was made on the basis of the four recorded days of the week (Monday through Thursday) recorded on videotape. The graphic result of this
Figure 22
Density of Service Encounters Observed Within 576 Fifteen Minute Segments in Observation Period
Overall, it was found that Tuesday evenings were the busiest during the recorded period, with an average of 123.1 service encounters per evening, and a median of 120 service encounters. In order of their frequency of average service encounters, the others were Monday (average 107.3); Wednesday (average 107.1); and Thursday (average 105.8).

A partial explanation of this day-of-the-week variance in activity will be found in the testimony of key informants presented below.

The Study's Service Encounters in Perspective

The observation period of this study recorded on videotape a total of 4,010 service encounters distributed over 36 four hour evening observation periods. The range and variability of observed encounters was remarkable. No two days contained exactly the same number of encounters.

The number of observed service encounters ranged from a low of 51 on the first day of videotaping (March 28, 1988) to a high of 168 on the last day of videotaping (May 31, 1988). The average number of service encounters across the period was 111.4. The
Figure 23
Pattern of Observed Service Encounters
(Mondays)
Figure 24
Pattern of Observed Service Encounters (Tuesdays)
Figure 25
Pattern of Observed Service Encounters
(Wednesdays)
Figure 26
Pattern of Observed Service Encounters (Thursdays)
median number of encounters across the 36 observation evenings was 113. The fluctuation in frequency of service encounters over the course of the 36 evenings can be seen in Figure 27.

**Temporal Commentary in Non-Observational Data**

The focus of questions 1.3 and 1.4 was on issues of time and activities which occurred within them. The foregoing graphic displays illustrate the level of activity recorded over the course of this study. Clearly they are useful in making accurate statements about what student assistants do, and, more precisely, how often they are called upon to do what they do.

This study, however, assumed the interaction between student assistants and library users would reveal important aspects of the surrounding cultural structure in which these actors played a part. By understanding the circumstances of what they actually did, an understanding of their cultural milieu would also emerge.

Interviews with student assistants and library users provided the critical elements of interpretation of the observed flow of time and activities revealed in the videotaped data.
Service Encounters Observed, 6-10 pm

Figure 27
Service Encounters Recorded During Observation Period
Two Kinds of Time and Activities

The observational component of this study isolated and preserved one body of data, namely, the 144 activity-laden hours which provided the means to study student assistants and their participation in this setting's service enterprise. The collected interview data bore directly on aspects of the recorded activity (which will be covered in a moment), but the interviews provided something else as well: they provided a wide context in which to view the service environment. This context may be seen in Figure 28, below. The

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Pre-College Time

Class Standing (4 yr.)
(Freshman to Senior)

Academic Term in Year

Week in Academic Term

Day in Week

Time of Day

[Service Encounter]

Shift of Student Assistant

Figure 28
Time Contexts Mentioned by Key Informants
elements in this figure may be compared with those in Figure 3 (page 107) showing the boundaries of the perspective offered by the observational data alone.

The elements mentioned in Figure 28 point up one of the difficulties with assessing isolated unfolding service encounters. Both student assistants and non-assistant student informants referred to events and experiences which precede immediate service encounters by months, even years. As a single event occurs it is often impossible to comprehend all of the dynamic elements which have significance. These temporal aspects include:

**Pre-college time.** The most distant time frames mentioned by informants were pre-college times when the informants had been exposed to other libraries as high school students. At such times, it may be argued, people acquire a significant body of information about, and attitudes toward, libraries and librarians. During this time they may or may not develop competencies in the use of libraries, which has significant implications for what kinds of help they require of student assistants in college.

Some of the student assistants mentioned that it was during this pre-college period that they had become
interested in libraries, and some had decided to find a library job even before becoming a college student. Alicia, for example, said "I've always liked the books. I knew before I even came here that I was going to try to get a library job." Similarly, Karen recounted meeting two Otterbein College library employees at a summer camp after she graduated from high school. When they learned she was going to Otterbein College the following Fall term, they urged her to join them at the library.

The undergraduate experience. All of the interviewed informants mentioned some maturational aspect of the four year undergraduate experience which profoundly affected the manner in which libraries and student assistants are used. Some suggested that the level of increased sophistication of course work as one passes from one year to the next brings upperclass persons to the library with specific and sometimes unique research needs as they prepare term and research papers.

Ironically, frequent use of the library provides library users with the familiarity about the library obviating the necessity for basic orientation and directional assistance, tasks which student assistants
perform frequently. Earlier in this chapter an extensive quote from Philip mentioned that his informational needs had become so specific that, as a junior and senior, he usually bypassed the library assistant in favor of the assistance of a more knowledgeable professional librarian.

In a broad sense, then, wider circles of time and experience have deep influences in relation to an individual's use of the library, and their use of student assistants.

Narrower Perceptions of Time

More pertinent to the observation period, student assistants and their non-assistant cohorts provided their perceptions of activity in the library during different time periods. Those views are summarized below.

Term of the academic year. The selection of the Spring quarter as the observation period for this study was predicated more upon the available temporal resources of the researcher than a purposeful decision to section this term over others. Both Julie and Philip, non-assistant informants, suggested that the Spring term was generally slower, in their perception,
than the other academic terms. Their explanations were similar. Julie said: "More from a prediction than a sure observation, I would think...it's less active in Spring quarter because you see so many people outside playing frisbee and baseball, and stuff." Philip added a further insight on the weather: "I think any time the weather's nice outside, it's time to socialize in the library." He further claimed that such nice weather distracts students in the library from their focus on scholarly activities.

Student assistants who had worked in the library for two or three years thought the busiest quarter was the Fall quarter, but made little distinction between the Winter quarter and Spring quarter.

Activity within term. The student assistants each perceived patterns of activity within an academic quarter. Alicia, for example, considered activity within an academic quarter in the following way:

  Int:  Okay. What about uh, a situation where you have a term. The academic term. Ten weeks.
  Alicia: They hold everything off until the last minute.
  Int:  Okay.
  Alicia: I, I even do it. Everybody is a procrastinator!
Int: Okay.

Alicia: I don't--people that aren't obviously have nothing else to do in their lives. (laughs)

Int: And so what are the implications of that for you as a worker at the desk?

Alicia: Well, about the eighth or ninth week it gets busier at the desk. Um. The first couple week--the first couple days it might be a little busy because everybody thinks "Oh yeah, well this quarter I'm going to change and I'm going to get everything--be on top of things, get everything done."

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: And then it'll just drop. (Laughs) You'll have the occasional person that has to get stuff from closed reserve, mainly,

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: Or things for reports that are due the next day.

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: Everything seems to be due the next day.

Allen, another student assistant, noticed this necessity-base pattern of activity:

Yeah, there's, I mean, once you're into a certain time into the term you know you're going to get a few people, more people, coming in. They're going to be starting to turn papers in when they're supposed to. They'll start coming in. You know, you can tell when certain classes are going to have projects. You know, and they need these books or these books because it's the same thing every single term. So you can kinda gauge when, you know, there's going to be certain activities in this area.
The assessments of activity over the course of a term made by two student assistants, Nancy and Karen, most nearly match the pattern encountered during the observational phase of this study:

Nancy: ...We had a pretty steady flow of customers last night, of patrons and things uh, because it's the end of the term.

Int: Yes. So that's another aspect of time.

Nancy: Um, oh yeah. It makes a real big difference what time of the quarter it is.

Int: Okay.

Nancy: And what night of the week.

Int: Alright, so, at what point of the quarter do you find more activity?

Nancy: About the fifth week it's starts to pick up. When people have midterms, usually they have their first small paper due, um, so, you know, you--there's more books checked out. You can see the circulation growing, and it just keeps on growing as the quarter goes on.

Int: Okay. Um, and then uh, towards the end, I mean from the fifth week 'til the tenth?

Nancy: Yeah, I think, I think it builds and then, in the tenth week people are kind of done. So it kind of, probably stalls there, again.

This view was largely corroborated by Karen's observation that:

Karen: The first couple of weeks are pretty, pretty quiet around here.
Int: Um hum.

Karen: And there aren't too many books being checked out. People don't have papers due yet.

Int: Um hum.

Karen: Um, periodicals aren't being checked out. We're caught up on most shelving and everything. I imagine by midterm time, third, fourth, fifth week--

Int: Um hum.

Karen: Is when things really start getting busy. People are studying more in the library. You don't always have the circulation but you have a lot of people actually in the library studying.

Int: Um hum.

Karen: By seventh, eighth, ninth week, towards the end of the quarter, it's when papers are due, when books are frantically going out--

Int: Yes.

Karen: And being checked in. I think right now I've seen most every day, carts of books to be shelved. Because people are dropping off their overdues, their overdue books or books that they've just finished reading.

Int: Um hum.

Karen: So probably from now until the end of quarter, exams are over, there'll be a pretty steady stream of people, both checking books out and bringing them back.

Int: And what does that mean to the person at the desk?

Karen: It means it's a busy time.
Int: Okay.
Karen: A real busy time. Time will go quickly.

Speaking of this last rush of activity at the end of the term, Allen mentioned the significance of finals week: "When that week comes around it's like you go to work, you're done. Because you just check magazines out, check the books out, the whole time. And time really flies by."

Non-assistant informants, like Philip, observed that the activity in the library appeared to increase as the term wore on, and there seemed to be more people in the library studying, though not necessarily using library materials. Brian advanced his fellow students' motives: "Towards the middle of the term," he asserted, "people are, looking around and think. 'Well, it's time to study now.'" Philip's statement about library use, however, led to a further exploration of the quantitative data, which shall be mentioned in a moment.

A remark by Rhonda, a non-assistant informant, supports what Alicia said about the pattern of activity at the beginning of the quarter:

Yeah, I think what's funny is, at the beginning of the quarter, I notice a lot of new faces in the library and then they kind of leave again. And then, at the end of the quarter, uh, definitely it gets busier. Because there's finals and so forth, but it's, it's kind of amusing because these new
faces, maybe people who are: 'Okay, we're going to get serious now, it's the beginning of a new quarter.' You know, and then you don't see them anymore.' (laughs)

This pattern of activity whereby library users are only briefly introduced to the library then return weeks later suggests that student assistants may be called on throughout the quarter to provide basic information, again and again.

The perceptions of the key informants regarding service encounter activity over the course of an academic term may be seen by comparing this study's observationally-derived findings displayed in Figure 27. Activity increased markedly after the second half of the observation period. While there were twelve evenings during the first half in which 100 or fewer encounters were observed, only one evening during the second half saw fewer than 100 service encounters. One substantial increase in activity was seen at midpoint in the observation period. This spike in activity coincided with the midterm examination period.

Days of the week. The average number of service encounters observed over the course of the videotape recordings made for this study showed that the order of frequency ranked the days of the week as Tuesday, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. None of those
interviewed provided this exact profile of activity, though most of them agreed Thursday was a special night because that was when many of their fellow students went down to Columbus to visit the bars on High Street, across from the Ohio State University campus.

Most of them noticed, too, that the fraternity and sorority meetings on Monday nights tended to reduce the number of students in the library early in the evening. But even so, some agreed prediction was difficult. According to Julie: "I think Monday nights must be kind of empty, although I mean, I always think that they must be because, for sorority and fraternity meetings. And then I come here and it's not, so that always surprises me."

Evening service encounters compared with daily turnstile count. Interviewed student and non-assistants suggested that while specific library services may not be sought by library users until academic requirements absolutely require it, students nonetheless used the library for other purposes, mainly for homework, study or social purposes.

This assumption was explored by gathering daily library turnstile counts to see if the pattern of daily activity bore any similarity to the observed service
encounters recorded for this study. Although service encounters actually occurring throughout the day may not occur in the same absolute frequency earlier in the day, the same force of the academic calendar (examination dates, term paper deadlines) is exerted on students throughout any given day. It was therefore believed that emerging patterns in the observed data would generally represent the daily activity level at the circulation desk.

The pattern of service encounters recorded during each of the 36 evenings videotaping sessions has already been shown in Figure 27. The turnstile counts for those same observation days are shown below in Figure 29.

For the first twenty days of the observation period, with few exceptions, the pattern of persons in the library was similar to the rise and fall of numbers observed during evening hours at the circulation counter. Thereafter, however, the upswing reflected in observed service encounters is not reflected in similar increases of absolute numbers of persons in the library. In fact, during the observation period, the lowest number of persons shown on the turnstile count, 539, corresponded with the lowest number of observed evening
Figure 29
Whole-day Library Turnstile Count for Observation Period
service transactions, 51. The highest number of persons found on the daily turnstile count, 1178, was about 2.2 times the lowest count, while the highest number of observed service encounters in a single evening, 168, was 3.3 times as great as the lowest number of observed service encounters.

Although the turnstile counts do not correspond directly to the temporal boundaries of the observational part of this study, this finding nevertheless raises another aspect concerning time and activity in this setting. It suggests that students visit the library more regularly than they actually initiate service encounters with student assistants. Further, service encounters increase as the academic term advances, reflecting deadlines and other academic requirements of the college.

Hour by hour patterns. Just as the activities had been noticed to have increased markedly in the second half (last five weeks) of the observation period, there was another pattern of increased activity, averaged over the entire 36 evenings, of greater observed activities after the 7th quarter hour (that is, after 8:00 pm). This is graphically represented in Figure 21.
Student assistants and regular visitors to the library acknowledged patterns of library use which could be seen from hour to hour. Juanita, a student assistant, reported that "it's really slow between five and six in the evening--there's almost nobody in the library. It's the dinner hour."

Rhonda, a non-assistant, but frequent library user commented on the period when observations commenced on videotapes in this study:

...At six o'clock, umm it's still fairly quiet. I think people are at dinner and there's adults floating in and out. And some left over day students. Um, as it rolls around more into eight o'clock, then the activity and the social life starts.

This quiet time, proved to be popular with Julie who mentioned: "I like to come over the dinner hour, too. Because it tends to be quieter and less people there. So that's five to six-thirty time."

Earlier it was shown that the data collected in the observational phase of this study showed a pattern of increased activity after the seventh quarter hour period--after 7:45 pm. This trend was shown to continue over the remaining quarter hour periods of the evening.

Student assistants, when questioned about this, unhesitatingly responded, like Juanita, who said "during the circulation count in the last two hours of the
evening...a lot of people are coming to check out books." Alicia, whose evening shift was typically from eight to ten o'clock remarked "maybe seventy percent" of the time she felt rushed "'cause I mean, at night is when it's the busiest."

**Density of Activity**

It has been shown that activity recorded on videotapes during the observational phase of this study varied considerably between the low of zero encounters to eighteen in a single quarter hour period. Those extremes were few, the average was just under seven service encounters per quarter hour. Allen assessed the tempo of an evening shift in the library with: "It'll be busy enough, and it might slack off a bit. As a whole, it's busy enough that you're occupied most of the time."

**Low activity levels.** Periods of time with few service encounters, slow time, were understandably reported as boring and uninteresting. Some assistants were frankly distressed about these slow periods of time. Allen expressed the sentiment humorously:

There's some time when there's nothing to do and no one there, you just [say to yourself]: 'C'mon, let's have some people here! Let's get the hour over with!'
Other student assistants did not disguise their frustration with this inactivity. Juanita said flatly, "Time really seems to drag on when the library is dead and there's nothing to do...At the beginning of the quarter there's not a lot to do. And you basically have to do busy work." Nancy voiced a similar view: "I like to have something to do, the whole time I'm working there. I get real frustrated if there's no job left. Especially if nobody walks by and I don't have anybody to talk to."

All five of the interviewed student assistants expressed their dissatisfaction with these periods of time, declaring that having nothing to do was "a waste of everybody's time." That attitude is communicated beyond the walls of the library. Julie, a interviewed student who does not work in the library mentioned hearing comments from her friends who work in the library: "I've heard them say, 'You know...work was hard because it was boring tonight, nobody was in.'"

High activity levels. The data collected in the observation phase of this study indicated that high activity periods are relatively few. In fact, a total of 410 of the 4,010 transactions observed occurred in the five highest activity categories (14 to 18
transactions occurring in a fifteen minute period.
Julie, although she did not work in the library, noted
the fatiguing aspect of the occasional high activity
levels: "When it's really busy they get kinda flustered
and stuff like that, and I think sometimes after they've
been quiet for two hours, that all the sudden there's
activity, they're tired!"

High activity periods might be fatiguing, but the
student assistants preferred it over inactivity. Alicia
remarked that "If we're really busy, or something, it
seems to go faster, more swiftly and smoother. Even
though there's problems and everything, it just seems
like that." Karen agreed that because of high activity
"sometimes it's not the best situation when you're
working. You just get run ragged." However she adds
"I'd rather be real busy. Where...you get a lot done
in that time."

High activity periods occur frequently in the
minutes before closing time. Patron behavior to remain
until the last minute occasioned critical comments from
some student assistants. Nancy observed:

Towards closing time...people want information now
because it's due tomorrow. That really gets on my
nerves, because they walk in ten minutes before we
close and they want all this information... People
just don't realize that we close and, you know, we
have, especially in the last fifteen minutes of the
hour, we have lots of things to do.
Juanita was similarly negative on this point: "They don't think about the librarians wanting to get out of here...it means that we have to count all those books and everything and check them out and lock the doors and everything like that."

The student assistants interviewed spoke quite uncritically about many aspects of their duties, but periods of very low and very high activity were problematic and undesirable to most of them.

**Routine and Extraordinary Activities**

The foregoing discussions concerning the observed patterns of activities and how student assistants view these activities helps to provide a sense of the routineness and extraordinariness of activities in which they are involved. The 4,010 transactions recorded in this study are categorized by encounter type and frequency of appearance in Appendix C. Routine activities are clustered around the domains of information delivery (Figure 7) and materials processing (Figures 8 and 9).

The lowest frequency of activity which was observed was the domain of rule enforcement. Students neither perform rule enforcement frequently, nor do they express enthusiasm for having to do those tasks when they are
called upon to do so.

But within the range of more frequently occurring responsibilities, students readily acknowledge difficulties in learning procedures which are not frequently practiced. Allen, for example, recalled that becoming knowledgeable about all the specific details of circulation, checking out a pamphlet or government document, were problematic because these cases were so infrequently encountered in the course of an ordinary work shift.

Similarly, Alicia reported difficulty in recalling details of the Superintendent of Documents classification schedules used with federal documents in the library. While Alicia had had some basic orientation into government documents, the extraordinariness of actual use of that knowledge resulted in her sending library patrons with specific document questions to one of the professional librarians.

Alicia, too, mentioned an occurrence which she considered extraordinary:

'Member one weird question, but, I don't think, it doesn't have anything to do with the library... It's just an out of the ordinary question, that, I mean, some guy asked me where a hotel was! I mean, it was like, well, I mean, it was so off the wall!
While the count of activities which were observed (Appendix C) gives an indication of the frequency of actual encounter domains, subjective interpretations, based on each student assistant's own experience within those domains, largely determine the ordinariness or extraordinariness of frequently occurring encounter types.

FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 2.1 AND QUESTION 2.2

The first question sought to discover what are the normative requirements for acting and behaving as a student assistant. The second sought to discover what are the normative requirements for acting and behaving as an initiator of a service encounter.

The research questions in this study were interlocking, hence the insights each provides tend to overlap. The findings uncovered by the cluster of sub-questions under Question 1, just described, provide a wealth of information about what is deemed appropriate behavior in this setting on both sides of the counter.
Domain and Taxonomic Analysis of Non-observational Data

A domain analysis of three sources of non-observational data was conducted. The sources were the 664 typed pages of transcripts of interviews with key informants (student assistants and the non-assistant students), student assistant self-descriptions, and the descriptive portions of 225 library surveys which had been returned in the 1988/89 academic year. The surveys turned out to be unidimensional as only remarks concerning student assistant, not library user behaviors, were detected.

In separate operations, a domain analysis of these sources sought to find reported normative behaviors for both student assistants and library users. Once included terms had been assembled a taxonomic analysis was undertaken to discern further relationships among the domains. The taxonomies developed through these procedures are shown and described below.

Reported Normative Requirements for Acting and Behaving as a Student Assistant

The domains explored for this question were drawn both from what non-student assistant library users reported, usually in a critical fashion, and from what
student assistants themselves reported. Student assistants were sometimes aggressively critical of their peers on staff who they felt did not measure up to the requirements of the job. Figure 30, below, presents the taxonomy which emerged from this analysis. The elements of that taxonomy are discussed below.

**Perceptions of Competence**

It is hardly surprising that one of the most desirable characteristics of student assistants, from the standpoint of both patron and peer, is the ability to perform competently on the job. Competence was variously perceived. It meant, among other things, knowledge and familiarity with regular library procedures, precision and accuracy of task accomplishment, and speedy completion of tasks.

The strident comments concerning student assistants voiced by key informant Philip were mentioned earlier in this chapter. He simply passed over those with whom he had experienced problems, and found someone else to help him.

Interestingly, library patrons interviewed on this subject were generally forgiving of a particular student assistant's failure to live up to their expectations. Several of them said "it's not their fault" if they made
Figure 30
Domains of Normative Acts and Behaviors of Student Assistants
mistakes through inexperience. On the other hand, however, because professional librarians were nearby and available, these patrons admitted having no reluctance to bypass the student assistants in favor of more knowledgeable individuals when the services they provided were found lacking.

Competence was seen by some interviewed student assistants as acquired on the job, not solely through tedious training sessions which, they said, had little immediate relevance. The senior students, like Allen, suggested that competence lies in an active desire for improvement, by learning where things are, mastering procedures, and so forth. In short, to achieve what one non-assistant said was a crucial requirement for student assistants, to "know what's going on."

One final aspect of competence. Patrons who sought assistance suggested that while they had often sought the help of a student assistant, what they were most concerned about was obtaining service or materials, regardless of who provided it. Thus, they were critical of student assistants who did not readily engage the assistance of more knowledgeable staff persons to satisfy that need. Ted, a non-assistant informant said student assistants would gain his respect "...if they weren't able to answer, you know, a question, they would
definitely direct me to someone who could. And like, [say] 'In honesty, well, I'm not really sure, but I will direct you to this person, who will be definitely able to answer your question.'"

**Interpersonal Skills**

All ten of the interviewed informants commented that the job of student assistant, in continuous contact with the public, required an array of interpersonal skills, including friendliness, patience, tact, and sympathy for those who were unfamiliar with the library.

The element of "presence," described as one of the domains of personal service encounters (see page 141, above) in which student assistants engage, obviously has negative as well as positive manifestations. Allen, for example, shunned those student assistants who formerly gave him "weird looks" or treated him as if he was stupid.

"Fast, friendly service" is what one patron said is expected from student assistants. But, as Hollander (1985) has pointed out, the service literature indicates there is frequently a differential in what patrons want and how interested service providers are in supplying it. In this study, all five of the senior student assistants interviewed displayed a strong service
orientation. But not all of their colleagues shared this dedication. Allen admitted not all were as enthusiastic about the job: "Some of them just aren't into it. I mean, but you don't have to be totally into it, like live in the library!"

Nancy was not as forgiving, preferring to work alone than with another student assistant who was not as inclined toward service as she was.

Int: Okay, so you'd rather be out there on the line by yourself?
Nancy: Oh yeah, I would. I really would.

Int: Regardless of whether there might be several people out there waiting for you?
Nancy: Um hum.

Int: Okay. So you'd feel better about that just being out there?
Nancy: Yeah.

Int: Dealing with five or six students?
Nancy: Um hum.

Int: Okay, alright. Is there any particular reason for that?
Nancy: I feel inhibited sometimes when I'm working with another student, particularly someone who does not particularly like to work here. (laughs) I mean there's some people that are real, that work real well with the peop--., with the public, and, you know, aren't afraid to help people. And there are other students kinda sit there and look and like "Oh, they need to be helped, I guess I should get up and help
"em." And I'd just rather be there by myself and have to deal with all those people, because I know I can do it in a pleasant manner and get it all done. Whereas I know if I'm working with somebody else, and they, you know, say something or do something that embarrasses me or I think is not what the standard of working in the library is, it really bothers me, and I'd rather just be there by myself.

Int: Okay. What do you think the standard is? From your point of view?

Nancy: I guess that I think that, that, you know, I consider myself, you know, I'm not a librarian, but, you know, somewhere, right below that, I do, and I probably, I'm an overachiever in that standpoint, I'm probably, do a lot more than maybe what the position requires.

Int: Um hum.

Nancy: But that's just who I am.

Int: Yeah, yeah.

Nancy: I think we have a lot of students that are really god workers and that dress, you know, dress decent and, you know, are present--pleasant and friendly to the public. And I think that there are other people who had to get a job and this was the job to get.

Int: Um hum, um hum.

Nancy: And you can tell, and it's real obvious. And that really bothers me because I enjoy it and I work hard at it. When I see other people lagging behind it really bothers me.

One of the student assistants who prepared an anonymous self-description left a positive impression
Many people feel a negative aspect of the job is dealing with the public, however I enjoy this part of the job as well. I happen to have an outgoing personality and I can work well with handling difficult, intimidating people. I used to be a waitress, so compared (to that), the public at a library is easy for me. Most people come to the desk for help, not necessarily service, so most are pleasant... Part of what makes a patron or customer happy and pleasant to help is fast, efficient service. As long as we are not understaffed this won't be a problem and neither will the public.

Anonymous library surveys returned by patrons revealed some comments of praise, but one critically showed that not all student assistants were alike:

The work study students need an attitude change. When you are the only person at the main desk to check out books and they are talking to each other, I have to wait until their conversation is over and then they act annoyed that I want to check out. It is extremely irritating when it has happened—at least three different times. I am not accusing (sic) all of the 'helpers; but I belong in that library, too, and they are paid to help.

Finally, one other interpersonal skill was discovered as a positive attribute, namely, the ability to allow patrons to go about their affairs without undue intrusion or interference. This was described by one patron as not treating people with a constant barrage of 'Can I help you' type intrusions. Rather, patrons expected the student assistants should be standing by to help if necessary.
Summary

Student assistants are scrutinized on the basis of not only their ability to perform the tasks library patrons expect of them, but on the manner in which they accomplish those services. Library patrons may tolerate limited deficits in student assistant performance, but once the threshold has been crossed, they avail themselves of other, more reliable parties for satisfaction of their needs.

Student assistants themselves constitute a varied group in terms of their service orientation, as evidenced by the testimony of key informants here. Gaines (1977) observed in the long history of employment of student assistants, one of the key developments in the management of student assistants in college and university libraries was the evolution toward librarians' power to hire and fire student assistants, an option early librarians apparently did not have in their respective institutions. This study clearly showed that apathy, indifference, or incompetence on the part of student assistants in dealing with the public does not go unnoticed, and is approved of by neither patrons nor peers. Significantly, no student assistant in memory was discovered to have been discharged from their job in this library for such anti-patron behavior.
For whatever reasons (they were not investigated further), other factors (e.g., not showing up for work, not performing a task specifically directed by a librarian) were considered to be grounds for dismissal. This suggests that if such behavior was exhibited by student assistants in the presence of the professional staff it was tacitly sanctioned. Alternatively, such behavior might have been ignored, or perhaps an on-the-spot reprimand had satisfied the professional that the student assistant would mend his/her ways.

Reported Normative Requirements for Acting and Behaving as a Library Patron

Evidences of normative requirements for acting and behaving as a library patron were drawn from both patron and student assistant remarks. The domains uncovered here, however, helped reveal that this setting has differential requirements for the patrons and student assistants.

Figure 31, below, displays the taxonomy of behaviors which emerged following a domain and taxonomic analysis of the data sources. The elements found in those procedures are described below.
Figure 31
Domains of Normative Acts and Behaviors of Library Patrons
Perceived Competence

As for student assistants, certain competencies are expected of library patrons, as well as themselves. In this respect, Solomon and his colleagues (1985, p. 100) agree:

Any encounter is assumed to contain learned and consistent behavior patterns; each participant should enact certain behaviors in order for the transaction to proceed smoothly. It will be argued that the degree of congruence with this learned pattern or 'script' by both the service provider and customer is an important determinant of satisfaction with the encounter.

Requests made at service point. One sign of patron competence mentioned by student assistants is at what spatial point patrons initiate service encounters with assistants. While chiefly an expectation of library personnel, in the discussion of the observational data below, many patrons actually meet this expectation.

Nancy commented on what she believed to be the failure of some patrons to observe customary procedures:

...That bugs me, too, because people, people want to check out books and they're over at the closed reserve section. And you check out books over here. And it seems to me that it's pretty obvious where to go to get what kinds of services. People haven't figured that out yet! (laughs)

Observational data which will be described below indicates that many patrons follow the assistant to the
point of service in the course of the service encounter, but not all do.

Clearly stated requests. The ideal patron, according to Karen, knows what s/he wants. When requesting a reserve item, for example, s/he "knows the course number, specific article or book." But often far from ideal specificity, service encounters between student assistants and library patrons sometimes require assistants to infer what they need to do from vague cues. The more experienced the assistant, the better they report understanding patron needs. Nancy, for example, asserted that, "I can usually tell, like when people come down the stairs and they're coming towards the desk, what kinds, what the questions they'll have."

Other student assistants were questioned about how they anticipate the needs of library users. Alicia provided several concrete examples of cues to which she sometimes responded.

Int: Okay. Ah, what kind of people do you encounter at the circulation desk? Have you ever had the opportunity or do you categorize those people? As they're approaching, do you have little--

Alicia: (Laughs) This is what you were asking in the back room!

Int: -- Categories?
Alicia: The people that want change. The people that want to check out books.

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: Or return books. And magazines. Uh, the people that want closed reserve.

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: Study room keys.

Int: Yes.

Alicia: And you can always see these people, how they come up. (laughs) If they have—they're coming through the door with books and everything, you know they're going to return them.

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: Or renew them, as the case may be. And, people coming downstairs with books obviously want to either check them out or just leave them for you to put away yourself.

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: If they just come to the desk, and well, just stand right by that little checkout machine, they probably want study-room keys.

Int: Okay.

Alicia: If they want money they're usually jangling it or carrying bills around.

Int: Um hum, so this is how you're able to, to actually figure out what they're after, what they're doing?

Alicia: Right, um hum.

Int: Okay, any other kind of categories?

Alicia: Uh, sometimes they look puzzled. And that's when they're lost.
Int: Okay.

Alicia: If they have those little blue slips where they write the call numbers, they'll ask—you can always tell they're going to ask you where something is.

Int: Um hum.

Alicia: They're like "Well, where do I go from here?"

The ability of student assistants to describe and, to some degree, anticipate user requests suggests these behaviors are not random, rather, they are manifested in patterns which, to some degree, makes their interpretation possible. It also suggests that not all request cues are, or necessarily need to be, verbal in nature.

Library Rules Observed

One of the domains of student assistant service encounters previously discussed concerned the enforcement of library rules and regulations. It is naturally expected that students will abide by such rules.

The student assistants interviewed revealed that, for the most part, patrons presented few enforcement problems. Instances of overdue materials surreptitiously returned to the desk were reported, but flagrant instances of misconduct were not.
A revealing incident of shared group acknowledgement of library rules occurred in one videotaped event when a student apparently accidentally forgot to check out a magazine and triggered the library's security system as he exited. A group of three students waiting their turn at the counter jeered the hapless student good naturedly, but pointedly. For the nearby group there appeared to be no mystery about why the system was triggered and no sympathy for the student's error.

Interpersonal Skills

The cluster of interpersonal skills which library patrons are expected to possess were reported by student assistant and patron alike. The interviewed patrons agreed that the most difficult customers they had observed were the adult degree students who were more likely to vent their frustration than other students.

Each of the student assistants had their own particular problem patron story to recount. Allen was particularly distressed with the "belligerent jock type," who acts as though "Gosh, I have to be in the library. It's your fault I need this book." And if the student assistant cannot locate the book, Allen suggests the angry patron behaves as if, "You can't find it, it's
your fault, I'm going to kill you."

Nancy admitted that it is frustrating to deal with those patrons who demand "Well, why isn't it here?" And occasionally, as Juanita describes, some patrons become difficult for the professional librarians as well.

Juanita: Um, well, just recently I was working up in the periodical section and this guy demanded to know exactly where these things were. He hadn't even attempted to look anything up. He didn't know how to use the library, he didn't know how to use the equipment in the library, and just the week before his class had come in for an orientation session and he had skipped that class. And he was very rude to me and he was very rude to the librarian. And, um, he was very demanding and he couldn't understand why we weren't bowing to his every single little basic need and he didn't understand the fact that we can't carry every single journal in the library that he wanted. And he demanded to know why we didn't have the particular one he wanted. And I was, I tried to be very patient with him, but it was very difficult.

Int: How did that, how did that encounter conclude? What exactly happened?

Juanita: Um, well it's an ongoing thing. He hasn't come back yet as of last Thursday, but he had been there the two days before that.

Int: I see.

Juanita: And each time he came up he was, he was just the same way. He demanded to know, you know, these things and he just wasn't very understanding that, of the library, and, of the library and what we have here available for him.
The student assistants were bewildered that some patrons treated them with such contempt, though they had nothing to do with the library's lack of resources, a book already checked out, or a misplaced magazine. Karen was the only student assistant without a horror story, but said if confronted with such a patron "I think I would probably just tell 'em: 'Hey! I'm just a student worker and---that's it!''"

Summary

Service encounters between student assistants and library patrons are governed by subtle rules of behavior whose boundaries are sometimes recognized only when behaviors exceed those boundaries. The student who attempts to cross through the library's security system without observing library rules (checking out) is a most obvious example of this.

Students are hired to assist the library staff in making available the library's resources to the public. They are regularly paid for this service and it is little wonder that this study showed that they have generally have greater demands for competence and skill placed upon them, than do library users.

Finally, library patrons have little to lose should their behavior cross boundaries of normative conduct.
Student assistants, particularly those who are sincerely committed to their job, risk representing the library in a poor light as well as being fired.

The next section will discuss observational data in which the normative rules of behavior of participants in this setting are played out.

Analysis of Observational Data

The analysis of observational data for normative rules of conduct proceeded along two independent lines. The first was an investigation of the structure of service encounters involving a sample of the total data base of recordings. The second was an analysis of the entire data base concerning requests at points of service and patron movement toward points of service following request.

Service Encounter Structures

The structure of unfolding service encounters between student assistants and library patrons was analyzed by comparing field note accounts of service encounters which occurred during the first twelve hours of videotaping.
The field notes had been processed in such a way that each service encounter was stored separately in a word processing file and typed on a separate sheet of paper. Encounter types (book check out, request for change, reference question, etc.) were arranged in sections of two large notebooks. By a procedure of constant comparison, each encounter was compared against the other, resulting in an emergent pattern of the service encounters. Videotapes were reviewed as necessary used where written descriptions did not adequately describe the unfolding service encounter.

A general structure of service encounters emerged after this procedure and is shown in Figure 32. This model, however, accounts for elements occurring in the aggregate sample of service encounters. Only the most complicated encounter would include all or most of the elements shown here. A discussion of observed patterns of behavior for each service encounter cluster is presented below.

**General Remarks**

The sample of service encounters recorded during these twelve hours represent almost 9% of the total number recorded. The examination of this data
I. Signalled Commencement of Transaction: Arrival

**Patron**

Arrives
   a) Point of service
   b) Non-point of service

Cues non-verbally
   a) Gestured greeting
   b) Makes noise (knocks, bumps, thumps etc.)

**Student Assistant**

Attends to patron
   a) Stands, if sitting
   b) Moves toward counter
   c) Halts conversation w/others

Responds verbally
   a) Greeting
   b) Interrogative

**Greeting (optional)**

II. Definition of Service Request

**Patron**

States request
   (precision variable)

Supplies additional information
   (as required)

**Student Assistant**

Acknowledges
   a) Verbally
   b) Non-verbally

Clarifies request
   (as required)

Refers to librarian
   (if necessary)

III. Satisfaction and Conclusion of Service Request

**Patron**

Moves toward point of service (optional)

Supplies ID

**Expression of thanks**

**Closing greeting**

**Student Assistant**

Provides requested service/material

Requests ID (optional)

Supplies additional information (optional)

Acknowledgement

Closing greeting

---

Figure 32
Model of General Service Encounter Structure
revealed patterns across many domains of service encounters.

The student assistants were observed in all but 8 instances to have attended the patron at the desk by either rising from a seated position, or walking toward the patron at the counter. The exceptions to this widely seen attentiveness were observed when the assistants were engaged in friendly conversations, or when they were asked a question concerning a reserve item which they quickly answered.

During these particular service encounters student assistants involved a professional librarian in the service encounter on 17 occasions, less than 5% of the time. Of that number, professional librarians were called by student assistants ten times when they could not answer a reference question.

There was an unanticipated brevity of verbal communication, although this is generally consistent with what Czepiel and his colleagues (1985) describe as typical for formal service setting; task-oriented speech predominates. Among these encounters, there were relatively few greetings, few thank yous for service, and few farewells. Among the specific kinds of service encounters in this sample, however, certain patterns of behaviors recurred. They will be discussed in the order
of the taxonomy of service encounters shown in Figure 4, above.

Personal Service Domains

In this sample, personal service domains were represented by both tangible and intangible service encounter categories. In the latter category, eight friendly conversations were seen. Significantly, these were interrupted (and completed) by the approach of service-seeking patrons on four occasions. During the course of these encounters student assistants did not rise from their seated position on five occasions, signalling the informality of the exchange.

The tangible personal service encounters were manifested the realm of communications/delivery with the receipt of ten incoming telephone calls. A student assistant provided answers to three requests concerning whether the library held a particular book, two requesting to get in touch with someone on staff, one concerning whether the library was still hiring student assistants, one asking to renew books over the phone, one when no one was on the other end, and two whose nature could not be determined from the one-sided conversation.
The telephone was answered in each case with an institutional identification and the query "May I help you?"

Active Assistance Domains

Active assistance domains were represented by four service encounters involving equipment demonstrations (copy machine use instruction), and two involving a search for library materials patrons could not find. The longest service encounter seen among the 4,010 recorded, an unsuccessful attempt to locate a misplaced play (lasting over 10 minutes), was one of these.

In each of these six cases, verbal communication dominated and a generally longer exchange between patron and assistant was seen. Two of the six were heard to express their thanks for the assistance provided.

Information Delivery Domains

This sample contained 18 information requests and 28 reference questions. The student assistants answered three reference questions outright, sought the professional librarians for twelve others, and were asked by the patrons to direct them to the professionals in thirteen other instances.
The student assistants answered all of the 18 information requests themselves. Questions asked of the student assistants in this sample were locational in nature, where rest rooms were, where copier machine was, and so forth.

This domain was characterized by more talk than in most other domains seen in this sample. Only four of those who requested information expressed their thanks to the student assistants.

**Materials Processing (Type I) Domains**

In the twelve hour sample, this patron-initiated encounter domain was represented by 57 instances of book check-out. These encounters were those where student assistants prepared materials for removal from the library. In addition, there were 67 closed reserve material returns, three observed book returns, and one periodical was returned at the counter.

**Point of service requests.** The domains in this cluster were customarily handled at specific service points on the counter space. Patterns of patron behavior in this regard was seen with book check out where all the requests for this service occurred within four feet of the charge machine (see Figure 19, below).
This is markedly different from the return of the closed reserve items (normally checked out at the west side of the counter); only 17 of the 67 returns were taken back to the place where the item was charged out; the other 50 were variously placed on the facing counter space.

**Communication content.** The difference between book check out and material return was also seen in the amount of communication which occurred between the student assistant and the library patron. Of the sixty-seven reserve returns in the sample, 40 patrons returning the material said nothing as they placed the item on the counter or (rarely) handed it to an assistant. Eleven others said a brief thanks, and ten others said something more than a single word. In this latter category the longest utterance heard was "just waiting to return this." Student assistants responded verbally to patrons only eleven times in connection with reserve returns.

Book check out included verbal greetings by patrons to student assistants (n=5), greetings by student assistants to patrons ("Hello, how are you? Howya' doin'? Are you being helped?" etc.) (n=17), supplemental information ("due back on the 15th") (n=15), expressions of thanks (n=16), and farewell greetings (n=6).
Patrons made brief comments to students upon the return to the counter of two of the three regular circulating books. Explanation was required only because relatively few books were seen to be returned this way. The patron who returned the periodical asked if it was alright to leave it (periodicals customarily circulated from another counter on the library's second floor).

Presentation of identification. Book check outs required the presentation of an identification card, and of the fifty-seven instances seen here, four patrons declared they had no identification. Thirty-one patrons produced their identification without a prior request by the assistant.

Materials Processing (Type II) Domains

The two largest service encounter domains in this sample, and, in the overall collection of data, were the provision of change (36) and retrieval of requested closed reserve items (91). These domains contained behaviors where student assistants were required to react in such a way as to move to a particular area, obtain it for the patron, and deliver the item(s) to the patron. Reserve retrievals are potentially the most
complex of the routine encounters in which student assistants participate (though information and reference question domains are often more so).

Both types of service encounters have points of service on the west counter area. Closed reserve materials are arranged on shelves just north of the circulation area, inside another room adjoining the circulation area. The charge machine where reserve materials are checked out is on the northernmost side of the west counter area, and thus closer to the closed reserve shelves than any other part of the circulation area. Change is retrieved from a drawer which is located on the south side of the west counter area, where a change drawer is located. This geographical arrangement is shown below in Figure 33.

Point of service requests. In this sample, fifty-one (of ninety-one) reserve requests were initiated by patrons at the point of service, the north side of the west counter area. Another five patrons requested an item on the south-facing counter area (along points 1-6) but moved to the west counter area after the student assistant went to retrieve it.

Thirty-six requests were made for change. Twenty-two of these requests were made at the point of service,
Figure 33
Showing Points of Reference of Circulation Counter Area of Observed Library
near the change drawer, and three other requests were made elsewhere, but the patron walked around the counter to be handed their change at the west counter area.

**Articulation of requests.** In this sample, sixty-seven (of ninety-one) reserve requests included the exact name of the item, or the course, or the professor. Another fourteen persons had their syllabus in hand as they asked for an item. This large number (89%) of precisely phrased questions resulted in a smooth flow of encounters.

Change was requested by simple, unambiguous interrogative requests, although two patrons were asked by student assistants if they needed change.

**Presentation of identification.** The pattern noted with the circulation of regular books was seen in patron requests for reserve materials. Of the ninety-one requests posed at the counter, seventy actually resulted in the retrieval of items. Fifty-nine patrons produced their identification without a request by the assistant.

**Other elements of communication.** Greetings, acknowledgements, and expressions of thanks were not numerously observed. Among the combined encounter
categories (n=127), only twenty-two assistant-initiated greetings were heard; twelve initiated greetings were made by patrons. Thanks were uttered by patrons on sixteen occasions.

Other Service Encounter Domains

Thirty other encounters were seen in the sample, which involved greater communication between the student assistant and patrons. These were represented by collection of fines (n=8), maintenance of the copy machine (n=6), special assistance (n=6), and security system monitoring (n=5). Five other encounters were classified as reactivity to the recording instrument where verbal or non-verbal behaviors were directed toward, or about, the video camcorder.

None of these domains were routine in the sense that they occurred infrequently in the setting. Only two of them were conducted non-verbally—when the student with a heart pace-maker wished to pass through the book security system, it was wordlessly disabled by the student assistant on duty who recognized the student.
Summary

Patterns of behaviors were seen across the range of unfolding service encounters in this sample. From these patterns, some normative rules governing both library patrons and student assistants may be inferred. Below, in Table 8, is a list of the patterns seen in this observational data sample.

In general, this list of inferred normative rules corresponds to descriptions provided by both student assistants and library patrons of their environment, though truly negative cases of behavior were not seen here.

The rules inferred concerning library patrons' point of service request behaviors may be compared against the analysis of all 4,010 service encounters which follows directly below.

Service Point Request Patterns

In the course of preparing the Videotape Content Index sheets for all 4,010 encounters recorded in the observation period of this study, note was made of the physical location of patrons as they made contact with library personnel. Further, notation was kept to indicate where (if!) patrons moved after they arrived. Particular attention was given to the patron's movement
Table 8
Observed Patterns in Service Encounters
Suggesting Normative Behaviors in Setting

**Concerning Student Assistants**

--Attend physically to patrons in most cases

--Engage in a minimal amount of conversation with patrons

--Refer patrons to professional librarians in cases of a more complicated nature

--Generally understand patron’s non-verbal cues for service

**Concerning Library Patrons**

--Many (but not all) recognize and respond to service points when initiating service encounters

--Most provide unambiguous information to student assistants to achieve satisfaction of their needs

--Most are familiar with circulation protocols and do not need to be reminded of them (e.g., ID cards)

--Most do not observe library-centered material return protocol

**Concerning the Setting**

--Is more formal than informal

--Dominated by relatively uncomplicated encounters

--Task-oriented dialogue dominates conversation

--Greetings, expressions of thanks, and farewells are not common
toward service points where student assistants processed materials.

The underlying reason for noting these positional factors was the possibility that 1) they indicated the patron's familiarity with the setting, and 2) they indicated a politeness convention where patrons, most of whom were peers of the student assistants, would be less likely to be "waited on" and be more participatory in service encounters, going to where students were situated. A third possibility was also considered: appearance at a point from which service was normally issued was assumed to result in faster service.

The counter space displayed to the video camcorder provided a convenient grid system as the modular sections of the counter were marked with distinct black lines (indicating where each section was joined to the next). Figure 33, above, shows the numbering system which was employed. Activities which were not position-specific (telephone calls, security violations, etc.) to the counter space received no number. A dictionary placed on the corner of the converging counter areas was recorded "8," and anything which occurred on the west side of the counter was assigned "9."

The manner in which the body of service encounter data could be queried (in the format of a dBaseIII data
base) allowed for the count of specific service encounters initiated at specific points. The distribution of encounters seen on the counter space are shown below, in Table 9.

Patterns in the Data

A number of the services in which student assistants and patrons become engaged do not have meaningful physical bearings in this setting. For these types of encounters, the physical pattern of request initiation does not provide a great deal of meaningful information.

Encounters initiated at the main south-facing counter space is mediated not only by the patron's knowledge of the setting and/or observance of rules, but frequently, by the presence of others already at the counter. Observations revealed that when several patrons appeared at the counter few queued perpendicular to the counter, but rather, they lined up parallel to the counter. All this indicates that attempts to infer normative rules of behavior in regard to place of encounter initiation, at least on the south-facing counter, is problematic.

The same cannot be said for consideration of the point of service requests made of services normally
originating on the west counter area (closed reserve functions and money changing). During the observation period 1,242 service encounters were initiated from the west counter area. Over seventy per cent of them (870) were encounters which involved only three service domains: reserve requests, reserve returns, and change. Further, 117 encounters had been initiated elsewhere, but the patron moved to the west counter area where the student assistant had gone.

The pattern seen in the sampled data, above, with regard to the return of material was seen in the larger data as well. Only 223 returns of reserve material, less than 25% of the whole, were made at the west counter; the others were returned at the south-facing counter.

The normative rules which may be inferred from an analysis of the physical pattern of patron encounter initiation in this setting are limited, but they generally support what was learned from other sources of data. Schefflen (1976, p. 5) reminds us that a "territorial field is not simply an environment. It is, in fact, a more extensive and often more lasting field of relations of movement and other behavior...organized in a hierarchical way..." The findings here also
Table 9
Distribution of Service Encounters
Observed in Service Counter Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Number</th>
<th>Initiated Encounters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 1.25</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 - 1.75</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 2.25</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 2.75</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 3.25</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 - 3.75</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 4.25</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 - 4.75</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 5.25</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 - 5.75</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 6.75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (corner)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (west counter)</td>
<td>1242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 (not at counter)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total= 4010

[See Figure 33, above, for position orientation]
suggest a hierarchy of service encounter behaviors, and offers an interesting field for future research.

Summary

This section showed a number of instances where normative requirements have been formulated and are agreed upon by many, if not most, of the participants in the enterprise of requesting and providing service in this setting.

Those requirements can be perceived in the strength of resistance of participants to perceived crossing of the setting’s boundaries; student assistants can be as critical, sometimes even more so, of their fellow workers, as any irate patron.

While libraries are customarily viewed as having certain explicit rules, such as those governing the circulation of materials, the findings of this study showed that some customary ways of acting and behaving are subtle, such as in the places people initiate encounters in this setting. Subtle too, is the cool, business-like setting one finds after carefully analyzing the brevity, even absence, of conversation. The findings for this study’s last research questions which follow below indicate that the participation of student assistants in the provision of public services
is not wholly contained in the face-to-face encounter with patrons, but wider environmental factors are also at work.

FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 3.1

Question 3.1 was concerned with the discovering what limiting factors are inherent in the library itself. In regard to student assistants, the question contained two parts: 1) What part do resources play in limiting the provision of public services? and 2) What part do library rules and regulations play in limiting the provision of public services?

These questions alone are worthy of separate studies. In librarianship, coping with limited resources and confronting the material needs of the public are ingredients of what's called collection development. Establishing and modifying library rules and regulations, on the other hand, are general aspects of library administration.

In this study, however, these questions were explored only through their appearance in the course of service encounters between student assistants and patrons, and in the non-observational material collected. The findings for these questions will be considered separately, below.
Limited Library Resources

During the observational phase of this study service encounters seen in which the patron left, empty-handed, numbered 293. The number represents occasions when the library either did not possess an item, an item had been checked out to someone else, or had been lost.

Non-Ownership

On eighty-three separate occasions during the observation period assistants and librarians were observed explaining to patrons that the library did not possess a certain resource. The limitations included the lack of a specific periodical issue or title (n=47), a book (n=31), or a general class of materials (e.g. phone books from other cities; tax forms from a previous year) (n=5).

Many of the telephone calls overheard during this study were inquiries from patrons who wanted to find out whether the library held a particular title before they came to the library.

Closed Reserve Collection

One of the critical areas for the student assistants in regard to the library's possession or non-
possession of a particular item was seen and reported in the realm of the closed reserve collection.

The service encounter domain (materials processing, type II) under which transactions involving the closed reserve collection has previously been described as among the most intensive encounter situations in which assistants participate.

The observed character of patron requests for reserved materials revealed them to be made in a hurried, impatient manner. Recalling Philip's interview: "...A lot of my peers, library peers if you will, are in..pre-med. And so a lot of the times they have usually the same view: 'We need to get into this place, get what we need, and start studying right away.'"

When materials are listed on a student's syllabus, or mentioned in class by a professor as being in the library, but are not, problems arise for both patron and student assistant. Remarks made in anonymous user surveys reflect the frustration:

I have yet to go to the Otterbein library with a list of books on closed reserve for a nursing course and get everything done. Either the students cannot find it (then they look for help) or nursing doesn't make it available (perhaps both are true). In any case, it's a mess and should be rectified.
Another surveyed patron similarly reported:

Problems with reserve area. Always takes two people to find books/articles. Almost always get the same response. Prof. says materials on reserve, library says no.

Student assistants reported that suspicion falls frequently on their (in)ability to find the material first, and then on the actual absence of material. In her experience, Nancy reported that after class one group of students came to the library with an assignment:

They came over to the library to check something out of closed reserve. And it wasn’t on closed reserve. And they were just went through the roof! I mean, they were furious!

Clearly, this is a problematic area for student assistants, especially for those who share Alicia’s sympathetic sentiments: "You feel sorry that there..isn’t enough stuff in the back that can help the people that need it. Yeah, you feel real sorry."

Periodical Collection

In relation to the library’s periodical collection, student assistants were called upon on forty-seven occasions to assist patrons locate a periodical title or issue, but could not help because the material was not held by the library.
Of the seventy-nine critical comments contained in the library surveys returned by on- and off-campus students, twenty-three (29%) focused on the library's periodical collection. The criticisms are not unusual for small college libraries with limited budgets, but student assistants, eager to help patrons, have the disagreeable task of turning them away.

**Book Collection**

As with the periodical collection, student assistants are called upon to assist in the location of books in the collection. Their physical adjacency to the card catalog frequently involves them with patrons seeking particular materials in the library.

In terms of limitation in this area, thirty-one service encounters were observed where books were reportedly not found in the library (through the card catalog).

The patron perspective on this problem was manifested in eighteen (22% of all critical comments) remarks in library surveys about the absence of books in a particular field, or outdated books. Some of these comments referred to a professor's requirement that books used for research papers be no older than five
years, an expectation which will be taken up in discussion of question 3.2.

Summary

A small college library has obvious limitations in what it can provide to diverse constituencies in a college setting. This study revealed a situation where student assistants are called upon to represent the library in cases where these limitations are criticized by dissatisfied patrons.

Materials in Circulation

By far, the chief limitation to the provision of public service in this setting was seen when the library owned a particular item, but it was already in circulation to someone else. Instances of this category of limitation was seen in 202 encounters. Student assistants were seen to deal with two major categories of library resources.

Closed Reserve Collection

Heavily requested reserve materials in small quantity were the most frequently encountered among this category. A total of 190 separate requests for reserve materials already in circulation were observed.
Early in the observation period comments made by patrons indicated that only two books had been set aside for a class of 120 students. The two-hour use of these books was nearly constant for several evenings, and eighteen persons were turned away.

When questioned about the limitations imposed by limited quantities of reserve material, most student assistants said they did little to contribute to the improvement of the situation. Alicia explained:

It's not my job to tell the librarian, I guess... I think she would feel that I was overstepping my bounds of making the decision as to what we need, when we need it, and how we need it.

Allen, however, reportedly reacted to a sudden demand for two articles which needed to be read the following day by asking the librarian if he could make eight more copies to satisfy the demand. But even though he was the only student assistant interviewed who reported this kind of active involvement to alleviate the situation, he admitted occasional, though unspoken, irritation:

Students want all the stuff on closed reserve--then you've got to explain that to everyone that it's out and there's not more copies, go away!

**Books and Periodicals in Circulation**

Only twelve cases were observed when a library patron attempted to ascertain whether regularly
circulating material had been checked out. In general, the private search strategies used by patrons when they explored the library on their own was not revealed in this study. Some patrons may have browsed the shelves to find alternate titles or else found a high enough percentage of materials to satisfy their needs.

Student assistants became involved at the point that a particular item was needed. Among other things, they were seen to assist patrons in the verification of call numbers as well as check the circulation cards, overdues, and so forth. The longest running service encounter among all 4,010 detected involved a search for a play which was supposed to be in the collection.

Lost Items

Rare among the detected limitations seen during the observation period were instances where materials were assumed to be lost. Missing materials are often misplaced materials, but theft cannot be ruled out as a possibility.

Student assistants are engaged in what has been previously described in this study as active assistance service domains. Student assistants are called upon to locate these lost materials. Allen described his deliberate technique which was not always successful:
When I can't find something I don't get that upset. There's probably been cases where perhaps there's a book missing, or, you know, I'm sent up to find something in the shelves because someone else can find it. And I just spend half an hour looking for it. I look everywhere all over the shelf. Just thinking to myself. I look at the letter, okay where could they have misfiled it. I look in all those places and it's just, you just can't find the book. So, that sort of frustrates me--when you can't find something at all after half an hour.

During the observation period only eight instances were seen where student assistants became involved with patrons looking for what appeared to be a lost item. The long and sometimes discouraging process is not always appreciated by patrons, however. "Sometimes," Allen reported, despite the amount of time student assistants spend looking for an item, "that isn't enough for them."

Library Rules and Regulations

Generally speaking, library rules and regulations have subtle influence on much of what student assistants do in this setting, and so limit what occurs in any given service encounter. The domains of student assistant rule enforcement (Figure 10) have already been discussed in detail and will not be repeated here.

In general, two aspects of library rules were observed as immediately limiting factors in service encounters during this study are described below.
Of course, the normative rules of behavior which were discussed in the course of Question 2, above, constitute the cultural rules by which participants' behavior is governed.

**Circulation Rules**

The most obvious rules which affected the conduct of service encounters was the manner in which materials could be obtained in, and taken out of the library. The routine check out, requiring identification card, limited borrowing time, and so forth, belonged in this category.

Failure to check out materials properly resulted in the occasional violation of the security system, and student assistants then interrogated patrons to discover the nature of the violation.

Failure to observe library rules, too, as has been previously described, resulted in the assessment and collection of fines.

**Library Hours**

Another important aspect of library rules and regulations concerned the hours the library was open for service. Each observation session in this setting ended with the library's closing at 10 p.m. Student
assistants were quick to point out that the last half hour the library was especially hectic, and some patrons waited until the last minute to leave. This is, of course, supported by the number of service encounters observed in this study.

Library hours were cited as problematic for four patrons who returned the library survey. Longer evening and weekend hours were suggested. From the library assistant's standpoint, however, extended library hours was translated into later work hours. Alicia, in particular, mentioned the fatigue she experienced. At the time she was interviewed she worked until closing time, which led her to declare: "I know I'm not planning to work real late at night again. It's a little rough on commuters."

Summary

This study identified several areas where limited resources, or the temporary unavailability of resources, impacts upon student assistants engaged in the provision of services to the public. Each of the service encounter behaviors listed in Appendix C have the potential to be limited in some way because of resource limitations inherent in this setting. Student assistants are not responsible for these features of the
environment, but are sometimes carelessly accused of them.

The small college library is by nature a place of limited resources. The observations and comments made in this setting show that this is a disagreeable fact of life, despite the efforts of service-oriented persons, student assistants and librarians alike.

Library rules, too, limit service encounter activity by limiting access to materials through circulation policies, and through access policies in the form of library hours which determine when access is possible.

Student assistants are involved in the enterprise governed by these limitations, but have almost no direct participation in altering them.

**FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 3.2**

Question 3.2 asked "What larger institutional (e.g. college) factors affect the provision of services?" The circles of influence may be drawn very finely, but in this study, two major factors were frequently apparent as student assistants and library users engaged in service encounters.

This chapter has made frequent reference to these salient external factors at work as the study's data was
They will be only briefly reintroduced here.

The College Environment

Most key informants stated that the college environment was perhaps the most crucial element affecting the life inside the college library. The academic work requirements, the type of young person one typically sees, the leisure activities which bring students to the library and takes them away, all influence the manner in which the library functions.

Detached, unobtrusive observation of activity does not immediately reveal the elements of this wider environmental influence. Much of it was reported by participants. But even from the vantage point of systematic observation, the patterns of activity mirroring the academic calendar are certain indications of the close relationship to the wider setting.

Professors

The profound influence of single professors on the service encounters cannot be underrated. This study discovered numerous occasions when students were sent to the library to obtain specific materials by their professors. Closed reserve activity which dominates the
setting has a direct connection with professors, who placed the material there in the first place.

The influence of professors was seen to have both positive and negative consequences in this study. In cases where students were advised to find a particular book or article in the collection, that suggestion proved a positive impetus for the student to use the library. In other situations, however, when alleged materials were not in the library, problems developed.

The library in an academic setting cannot be separated from the scholarly and academic mission of the college, and although they were infrequently seen in person during the observation period, professors exerted a strong, silent influence.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Sustained, systematic observations supported by participant insights reveal this setting’s varied and complicated network of people and purposes, of intentions and expectations. Student assistants have been shown in these findings to possess a unique potential for advancing the library’s service goals. They are sought after by library users, particularly those who are new to the setting, and continue to provide orientation in the environment as well as the
basic services of book check out, library reserve
retrieval, money changing, and so forth.

These findings show, however, that if student
assistants are to provide more than these basic
services, they must be prepared, through training and
practice, to do these things. Library users who
approach the service counter are not unlike any other
service requester: they expect their request to be
satisfied. Student assistants may be the first choice
of their peers, but the five non-assistant key
informants agreed that they would skip over student
assistants to others on the library staff to satisfy
their needs.

Not only do the findings of this study reflect the
range and diversity of actual tasks student assistants
do, but the pattern of this activity over time also
emerged. This aspect of the study showed the
connectedness of the library's activities to those of
the surrounding academic community's. It is clear what
occurs in the college classroom, in terms of academic
requirements, is manifested in the library through the
services sought here. Related to this issue is how
library users actually use the library. Turnstile
counts showed fairly even occupancy of the library
throughout the academic term, but a wholly different
pattern was found in relation to the manner in which services were requested of library personnel at the circulation desk. Library users' service requests increased in relation to the requirements of the academic calendar.

The third major aspect of these findings concerned the normative rules for behavior which are at work in this environment. In their roles as providers of library services, library assistants await initiations of service requesters. When the pace of service activity of slow, their lives are boring and uninteresting. Similarly, when services are in high demand, they are sometimes under great stress to perform well. Service requesters do not bear the same kinds of burdens as service providers, though this study showed the former exhibit patterns of behavior in the manner in which they request materials, both from a communication standpoint (the content of how they request services) and from a spatial standpoint (point of service requests).

While student assistants depend solely on the requests of library users to fulfill their roles as service providers, this setting offers service requesters the option of seeking other kinds of helpers, the professional librarians, should they be mistrustful
or disenchanted with student assistants. And some library patrons, like Allen, routinely did skip over library assistants, relegating them to the role of providers of change and other clerical services.

Finally, this chapter reported findings on the role of the outside environment which affects the workings of the service environment in which student assistants are participants. The rhythm of the surrounding academic community as well as the acts of individual members (e.g., careless professors who send their students to the library in search of a non-existent reserve item) were found to make their mark here.

Chapter V, below, concerns itself with the broad implications of these findings in the light of the research methods employed to find them. That chapter also suggests what these findings mean for library professionals, and how they may be used to improve the environment where service encounters occur.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

At the beginning of this study it was noted that in 1982 student assistants worked more than forty million hours in academic libraries. This study set out to gain an understanding of the work lives of a group of student assistants at a single college library, within the boundaries of a particular time period. To accomplish this task an observational design was adopted to capture "corroborative details," those particular elements that the historian Barbara Tuchman (1965, July) referred to which vivify otherwise incomprehensible aspects of human activity. Specifically, this study explored the following questions:

What is the nature of the service environment of the library within which student assistant activities are embedded?

What is the nature of the social structure of the public service activities in which the student assistants are involved? (What are the normative requirements for conduct which influence the provision of service by student assistants?)
What is the nature of those factors external to the immediate service setting (the circulation counter) which impact upon the provision of public service by library student assistants?

This final chapter has three major purposes. First, it summarizes what has been learned about student assistants and the service environment in which their contributions are framed, and what this implies for participants in this setting. Second, this chapter shall assess the implications of undertaking of a prolonged and systematic investigation of this sort. And finally, the chapter shall conclude with a discussion of how future research may carry on this line of inquiry to discover more about the culture of the library.

LIBRARY CULTURE AND THE INTERACTION OF ITS PARTICIPANTS

Two related theoretical approaches have undergirded this study. The first accepts a classical definition that culture, "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man (sic) as a member of society" (Tylor, [1871], 1958, p.1).

Further, because libraries are unique institutional entities, providing special services (different than, say, supermarkets, schools and hospitals), and serving a
special clientel (information seekers), it was also assumed that the particular patterned activities which occur within a library's walls mark libraries as distinctive sub-cultures. Finally, it was assumed that college and university libraries constitute an even more specialized setting, having a distinctive role and function within their surrounding academic communities. This study set out to gain an understanding of the cultural setting in which student assistants were the focus.

The second theoretical proposition this study embraced was that of social interaction. Social interaction theory provides a lens through which a culture may be viewed. It does so by considering (Parsons, 1968, p. 434):

1. A set of "units" which interact with each other.

2. A set of rules or other "code" factors, the terms of which structure both the orientations of the units and the interaction itself.

3. An ordered or patterned system or process of the interaction itself.

4. An environment in which the system operates and with which systematic interchanges take place.

One can hardly deny that libraries are cultural artifacts, manifestations of the larger society's values, expectations and aspirations. But this study sought to gain an understanding of the culture played
out inside the library, between student assistants and library users. For this reason, social interaction theory was seen as a means of rationalizing the research approach used here, namely, discovering what people actually do in this setting by focusing on the nature of face-to-face service encounters.

A Model of the Library Setting

The findings reported in Chapter IV remained close to the data and close to the specific purposes of the study which were reiterated at the beginning of this chapter. This study revealed a cultural setting which may be simply illustrated by the model in Figure 34.

This model displays the central focus of this study, the service encounter between student assistants and library users, which is at the heart of the figure, at the convergence of the two circles ("student assistants" and "library users"). That interaction between participants occurs within the environment of the library, the central circle in this graphic model.

The library environment in this study was surrounded by the academic community which is seen in the second circle in the model.

Finally, student assistants and library users are part of one large surrounding society in which they, the
college, the library, and on-going service encounters are embedded. In the next section I shall discuss the relevance of this study's findings to this model.

The Nature of Service Encounters Between Student Assistants and Library Users

This study is not the first to explore what student assistants in academic libraries do, but unlike previous studies, this one, by virtue of its sustained observational design and dialogue with the setting's
participants, identified the pattern of those activities, the interrelationships among their elements, as well as their impact. Further, it uncovered significant issues concerning the accomplishment of those activities.

Implicit in this study was a desire to determine the normal flow of activities and then to discover why, when and how that flow was interrupted. In order to do this, this study uncovered the structure and pattern of service encounters, the ways in which roles of student assistants and library users were understood, and the environmental factors outside the immediate context of a given service encounter which impact on that normal flow of activity.

**Tasks Performed**

Over the course of months or years of employment, this study showed a student assistant assigned to the circulation desk performs many different duties: book check out, security system monitoring, copy machine maintenance, provision of information, and library reserve handling, to name a few (the entire list of duties observed in this study with their frequency of appearance is shown in Appendix I). This is consistent with others' findings (Brown, 1954; Fisher, 1953;
Gaines, 1977; Lyng, 1968). But that list is deceptive. Observations revealed in an ordinary one or two hour shift, student assistants received a relatively narrow range of service requests. Some procedures required to deal with uncommon requests (e.g., circulation of a government document) were practiced so infrequently that assistants admitted simply forgetting how to do them.

This study revealed that service encounters in which student assistants participated were overwhelmingly of a basic, uncomplicated variety. Over ten percent of observed activities involved counting out change for the photocopier, over ten percent involved the check out of a book, over twenty percent involved checking in and returning to the shelf of reserved material.

In fact, if students were also proficient with the adjoining closed reserve area, more than seventy percent of all their activities would be accomplished by the mastery of several basic clerical procedures and familiarity with the contents of a several hundred item closed reserve collection.

In short, most of the tasks library assistants were actually observed performing were neither complex nor problematic. They did these quickly and with precision. The normal flow of activities in which
student assistants participated was, however, found to be affected by several clusters of factors.

The Nature of the Participants

This study did not undertake an evaluation of service provided by student assistants. It also did not undertake to evaluate library patrons' in their relations with student assistants. But setting aside the matter of evaluation, this study did find that the smooth flow of service encounters was interrupted when 1) student assistants were unable to satisfy a service request because of their unfamiliarity with materials or procedures; and/or 2) the library patron was not able to specify what it is s/he wanted in clear or unambiguous terms. When these deficits were brought to the service encounter, they were visibly manifested by longer service encounters, occasionally resulting in queues of waiting students. Invisibly, as this study's interview data showed, these deficits resulted in perceptions of incompetence.

The issue of competence, or rather, perceived competence, was mentioned in the testimony of all ten interviewed student assistants and library users. Each of these key informants voiced some opinion concerning what both student assistants and library
users should be like. These perceptions of competence on both sides of the counter have significant effects on both sides of the counter: library users like Allen dismissed student assistants’ abilities to help because he perceived that student assistants were only marginally useful to him in the satisfaction of his information and other library service needs. Based on what Allen said about his awkward first attempts to obtain library services which elicited "weird looks" from student assistants, it is plausible to assume that student assistants who perceive the manner in which library users pose their requests as incompetent may project a disinterested or even hostile attitude toward the hapless novice library user, thus reducing the student assistants’ positive impact as peer-hosts in the library.

Library Instruction

One way to deal with this problem of perceived competence/incompetence is to develop library instructional programs for both student assistants and library users to increase both groups’ familiarity with the library setting. In 1985 this writer developed and taught a semester-long course in bibliographic instruction at Muskingum College (New Concord, Ohio)
which greatly enhanced the use of library materials. Student assistants were particularly encouraged to take the course so as to better assist their peers.

At a minimum, this study suggests two beneficial directions for instruction. Student assistants would greatly benefit from instruction in the operation and maintenance of library machinery. Additional instruction in the form of familiarization with the basic types of reference materials which the library holds (and which is located only a few feet from the circulation counter) would also be useful.

The other direction of instruction, for library users, should be concerned with how service procedures are accomplished, that is, what's expected of library users when they request a particular library service (providing the whole citation for a reserve item, for example).

Of course, more sophisticated programs of instruction, such as the aforementioned course this writer developed, are possible, but this study showed a pressing need in this setting for the latter kind of library instruction to smooth the flow of service encounters between student assistants and library users. This agrees with a recent model of service encounters proposed by Solomon and his associates (1985)
suggesting that the successful outcome of service encounters depends on both parties' mastery of a learned pattern or script of behavior.

**The Nature of the Library Setting**

Service encounters between the public and student assistants are naturally mediated by the resources of the library itself. Obviously student assistants cannot facilitate access to materials which the library does not possess (but by knowing what the library has or does not have, can save library users much time). However, because the library is a dynamic setting, there are continuous opportunities for student assistants to provide service to library users.

**Setting Geography**

On a mundane level, this study showed that student assistants serve as a bridge between novice library users and the physical complexity of the library. That which the library possesses is spatially configured and student assistants in this setting informed library patrons of their location as they responded to a variety of directional questions. Student assistants were heard to tell library users where rest rooms, copying machines, meeting rooms, types of materials (magazines,
microforms, government documents) and particular subject areas were located.

This study showed that student assistants play a valuable part in welcoming strangers, particularly unsure-of-themselves freshmen who gravitate toward these potentially more sympathetic library agents. This help-seeking behavior on the part of naive library users, reported by this study's student assistants and library users alike, agrees with what Durrance (1986) found, that some users purposefully avoid of using a library staff person if that person is a professional librarian. But that positive link between library, student assistant, and library user shows strain as the library setting becomes more complicated and/or library users become more sophisticated consumers of library materials and services.

Technological Innovations

Consider the relationship of student assistants to library users and library automation. When this study was undertaken the only pieces of library machinery available to the public were copy machines and microform reader/printers. The study revealed some of the problems which library users and student assistants encountered with this equipment: some student assistants
were less well prepared to assist patrons in their use than others. This observation called to attention the need for more deliberate training for student assistants in this area.

Since this study was completed the library acquired a public access CD-ROM (compact disk read only memory) computer work station which allows patrons to simulate an on-line computer search for citations to magazine and journal articles on a variety of subjects. Introductions of technological innovations in libraries are already commonplace (automated card catalogs have been installed in many large libraries) and are bound to increase well into the next century. Student assistants, by virtue of their unique peer relationship with the college students who use this library, have the potential to provide the basic use instruction in these new devices. To do so, of course, requires that they receive the appropriate training to enable them to do this.

Rule Enforcement

The invisible influence of the library in service encounters between library users and student assistants can also be seen in the assistants' recitation and support of library policies, such as fine and
circulation procedures. Although the study uncovered an unexpected report of a student's independent decision to partially forgive an overdue fine, no observed instances of this behavior were recorded, and students appeared to be guided by established rules in their relations with patrons.

The Academic Environment’s Influence

Those who regularly inhabit college and university librarians are well aware that their use is contingent on the scholarly requirements placed on students in their course work. One only needs to compare the number of persons in a college library during the academic year and during a vacation break to discern how intimately these factors are related.

In this study, the systematic recording of service encounters over the period of a full academic term showed further manifestations of that relationship. It was learned, for example, that while the number of individuals passing through the doors of the library remained fairly constant throughout the academic term, student assistants received substantially fewer service requests in the first half of the term than in the second. Key informants attributed this to both scheduled due dates and the natural inclination of their
fellow students to put off research papers and projects until the last moment.

Manifestations of the academic calendar were also seen in dramatic increases of activity. The seven busiest of thirty-six observed evenings were clustered at periods, paralleling midterm and final examination schedules when closed reserve materials were numerously reviewed.

Student assistants themselves were not immune to the surrounding academic currents. As part of that wider world they too were required to complete many of the same assignments their peers were. As paper deadlines approached or examinations loomed, some student assistants admitted finding themselves squeezed between their job and their academic requirements.

The normal flow of service encounters was also observed to be influenced by specific agents in the wider academic sphere when, for example, an entire class arrived at the desk requesting an reserve item just mentioned by a professor. Such situations temporarily produced queues of library patrons, briefly elevating the activity level of an otherwise ordinary evening.

More troublesome and time-consuming were instances where library users were misguided to the library in
search of an reserve item which a professor included on a syllabus but had failed to deliver to the library. Student assistants were then faced with the laborious (and hopeless) task of locating items which did not exist. A study comparing student and faculty perceptions of student library use by Sellen and Jirouch (1984)—indicating that faculty had substantially lower expectations of reserve material use than students—may provide some insight. The carelessness of some faculty members to insure correct citations, delivery to the library, etc. may arise from their misconception of how sought after reserve materials really are.

Finally, the influence of wider college life was manifested in reduced numbers of library patrons during evenings which were customarily treated as party nights (Thursdays) and on evenings of special athletic or entertainment events.

THE COURSE OF RESEARCH

This study of student assistants and their participation in the provision of public services in a small college library was undertaken with the assumption that prolonged observation of the setting and access to its participants, in the form of formal and informal interviews, would yield important insights into
the workings of the setting.

Social interaction theory was seen as a useful theoretical approach to understand the phenomena under investigation. This perspective offered the opportunity for framing the study along the lines of the assumption that social structures are generated by, and composed of, patterned interactions of individuals. This approach posed several issues for the study of the student assistant's world which shall be discussed below.

Selection of Researchable Questions

The appropriateness of researchable questions arose with the acceptance of the assumptions of social interaction theory, which was described earlier in this chapter.

Research questions appropriate to this theoretical orientation are obviously those in which social and cultural dimensions of a given setting are explored. The questions this study ultimately considered—regarding student assistants actively involved in dynamic service encounters with patrons—fit well with this orientation.

Just as crucial as the questions, of course, were the data, the manner in which it was collected, and the
way in which it was analyzed and presented to provide findings.

The Ethnographic Perspective

The significance of the findings uncovered in this study must also be viewed in terms of the theoretical-methodological issues surround the choice of an ethnographic perspective with which to gather and analyze the data. While this study was not a pure ethnography, it produced credible findings on the basis of its identification of patterned activity which were grounded in careful, sustained, and systematic observation.

Uncovering Levels of Complexity

This study set out to establish the broad aspects of service encounters through a long period of videotaping. While a shorter period of observation, two or three days or a week, may have given other researchers all they needed for a microanalysis of service encounter behavior, this study uncovered salient patterns of activity flow emanating from the social structure in which this library is embedded.

The means of exploring complexity from both macro and micro perspectives were, in fact, available to this
researcher because videotapes preserved the essence of service encounters, and continued exposure to the setting after the formal observation period enabled further, narrower inquiries.

Grounded Findings

This study differs from previous ones which sought to understand student assistants in that, among other things, its findings are grounded in both sustained and systematic observation. Such observation produced a picture of what student assistants actually do, how they actually do it, and in what manner of frequency they do it.

The findings in this study are also grounded in the words of the participants themselves. Conditions, situations and issues inherent in this setting were deliberately sought after in formal interviews with participants in this setting. It was a rich harvest; many details were garnered from pointedly asking and listening to those who really have a stake in this setting.

Interactive Approaches to the Data

The course of research in this study followed multiple lines of inquiry as patterned activity was
detected. The videotapes which kept a permanent record of observations which were reviewed again and again. When it was warranted, new data sources were investigated—interviews conducted, documents collected, etc. and the depth of understanding in which this manner of research proceeded was significantly enriched.

Anticipated Use of Findings

This study was undertaken not only for the purpose of exploration, but, because it was conducted by an insider who anticipated future opportunities to substantially modify key elements of the setting, was held to be particularly important for guiding the future. The use of findings, therefore, was not only directed toward the completion of an academic project, this dissertation, but the basis for significant modifications of the environment itself.

Summary

The foregoing discussion showed the choice to employ a general theory of culture and social interaction theory as an organizing framework for this study provided the means for discovering useful and important details about the setting. Further, this research approach enabled the discovery of multiple
levels of complexity which facilitated deeper understandings of the environment in which student assistants participate. Finally, because findings were guided by theory, they are not only plausible, but provide a compelling rationale for future policy decisions in regard to student assistants in this setting.

Previous studies of student assistants in academic libraries have not employed observational research strategies to uncover important details about their world. There are wide opportunities for future researchers to pursue such studies. In the final part of this chapter, some suggestions will be offered to them.

PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Overall, this study provided human faces to forces, factors and issues which confront library student assistants every day. But this study also produced useful information which has the potential to be applied not only in this setting, but in other small college libraries as well.
Student Assistants' Diminishing Impact

One of the striking findings of this study was the incongruity of student assistants who vigorously protested their function was to help library users in any way they could, while some interviewed patrons declared their frequent and deliberate avoidance of library assistants who no longer satisfied their needs. Further investigation offered some explanations for this.

In this study, the training and experience student assistants receive in the course of their career as a library worker are directed toward the accomplishment of specific library tasks, for example, check-out, change, fine collection, and so forth. Not only were they not specifically prepared (through training) to deal with higher order information requests and reference questions, they were formally prohibited from doing so. Without appropriate training, student assistants were discovered by library patrons to possess less and less useful information needed to advance academic research papers and projects. As they discovered that, library users simply bypassed the student assistant altogether and sought out the professionals.

It is clear, however, that some student assistants resisted this diminution of their role. This was found
particularly in the extravagant criticisms senior library assistants lodged against a targeted few newly hired freshmen who failed to behave in a helpful manner or treated their job nonchalantly.

This also helps explain some student assistants' aggressive disregard of library guidelines restricting their answering reference questions. Narrowly this may be seen as a breach of library protocol. From some of their remarks, however, it appears this insubordination was more accurately their attempt to participate more fully and more personally in the service enterprise.

Scheduling for Periods of Activity

Some student assistants indicated they sometimes felt their time was wasted doing little or nothing at the circulation desk. This study revealed a pattern of increased activity in the second half of the academic term as well as in the last two hours the library is open. Both of these findings provide a rationale for appropriately staffing the circulation area to accommodate those activity patterns.

Educating Library Users

Assuming the smooth flow of service is a desireable goal in a service setting, this study
revealed that the flow of activity is often interrupted when users are not aware or fail to observe conventional procedures. Professors must be reminded to supply sufficient numbers of reserve items, and not forget to deliver them to the library. Library users must be familiarized with the patterned way of library culture so that library personnel may quickly satisfy their service requests.

Rethinking the Role of Student Assistants

In individual libraries, policy makers have in their power the ability to alter the way student assistants are employed in the furtherance of the library's service goals. This study showed that student assistants possess a unique potential to assist their own peers, who in some cases prefer them over professional librarians.

But if student assistants are to provide more substantive help for library users, they must receive additional specific training in order to do this. Training in this case does not necessarily mean that student assistants should become, as one of this study's key informants said, "junior librarians," but their value to the library and their peers could be enhanced if, for example, they were thoroughly familiarized with
basic types of reference books which they could point out to library users.

Whatever added information was deemed appropriate for student assistants to master, this study showed that library patrons themselves would soon discern whether student assistants meet their needs. Periodic, systematic monitoring of library users' perceptions of the efficacy of student assistants' help could guide needed training program improvements.

Summary

So far we have seen the study undertaken here revealed that student assistants in an academic library are part of a multifaceted structure of influences and interactions. Service encounters within that structure were seen to occur in patterned ways which in many instances were directly related to influences of the surrounding structures.

Smooth flowing service encounters in which student assistants participate were shown to depend on competencies brought to the setting by both student assistants and library patrons. Improvement of the quality of service encounters, that is, in terms of prompt delivery of requested materials or information, implies that policy makers must move forward to educate
all participants in this setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Student assistants inhabit a dynamic environment, only a portion of which was studied here. A deeper insight into this interactive, patterned world may be gained through directed research into several areas this study did not address.

Acculturation Studies

Several senior student assistants reported they perceived a transformation during the course of their employment so that, in time, they felt they were student assistants. This study did not focus on how student assistants were introduced to their responsibilities by librarians, co-workers, and the public at large. Some student assistants claimed formal training was less valuable than on-the-job experiences with procedures. Such claims were not investigated here.

This study uncovered aspects of interaction between newly hired assistants and patrons, as well as with newly arrived freshman patrons and seasoned student assistants which suggest the dynamic nature of these relationships. All five of the non-assistant key informants noted that novice student assistants are
sought after less vigorously by library users than the seasoned assistants, especially when the library user is well acquainted with library procedures. But even while student assistants become more expert in what they do, this study showed that in this setting there is a threshold that virtually all student assistants reach in their dealings with patrons: student assistants are not professional librarians and are limited in what specialized services they can provide, particularly in the realm of reference service.

Aspects of Gender and Patron Relations

Female student assistants outnumbered the male student assistants in this study and, in fact, there was only one male among the professional librarians: this researcher. Gender was not considered in this study, but two Canadian researchers have raised the issue and studied the effect of gender on observers’ judgments of competence in library reference work (Harris and Michell, 1986).

In fact, Oberheim (1941) long ago observed differential aspects in male and female student aspects (she found female assistants were better suited to most library work than male assistants). An exploration of this dimension of student assistants and service
encounters with the public would provide an array of important insights about the setting.

**Professional Librarians’ Influences and Relationships**

The literature reviewed for this study in pursuit of previous research concerning student assistants in academic libraries revealed that the library profession has had a continuing interest in the subject of student assistants. That is to say, the debate over student assistants as a viable work force has been waged for a long time. This study mainly confided itself to accounting for service encounter interactions between library patrons and student assistants.

A study of the social and professional relationships between student assistants and librarians would help one to understand how professional views of student assistant contributions affect the playing out of student assistant roles.

**Factors Influencing Retention on the Job**

One key informant mentioned that student assistants who have been employed for over a year seem to be more sought after and valued by library patrons. No definite findings, however, indicated what aspects about either
the setting or student assistants themselves (abilities, personality traits, etc.) tend to attract, and then retain such persons in this environment.

Strategies predicated upon social interaction theory, such as observations of the patterns of on the job social networks between student assistants and other participants in the setting, may provide clues to that phenomenon.


Earlier in this decade, librarian-researchers were excoriated for their failure to develop creative ways to investigate their world. Library administration, in particular, was seen to be object an unending stream of questionnaire-driven research designs whose findings provided little of direct use to the profession (Odi, 1982). The application of a research design based in the culture of the library, revealing the patterned ways of engaging in life, is a significant departure from what has become the norm in this profession.

Institutional settings, like libraries, possess both individual and collective cultural identities. As accessible, public places, libraries offer unusually rich opportunities for unobtrusive observation,
particularly by insiders who wish to gain deeper understandings of that environment.

Approaches using strategies derived from social interaction theory may provide a viable alternative to the newest research trend in librarianship where librarians are unobtrusively observed providing assistance to someone they believe is an actual patron. Quality of assistance is then assessed on the basis of answers they supply to a pre-selected list of questions (see especially, Hernon and McClure, 1986; Hernon and McClure, 1987; and Whitlatch, 1989).

The application of this study's theoretical social interaction approach turns such pre-set experimental approaches upsidedown—the findings would surely be more firmly grounded in the reality of the setting and closer to what actually occurs.

Overview: The Task Ahead

College and university librarians, because of their close affiliation with their colleagues in the surrounding academic environment, are seeking out research opportunities and exploring aspects of their own setting in greater numbers than ever before. Better educated, and in some cases pressured into research through tenure demands, librarians are intent
on discovering more about the nature of their setting.

Studies such as this one, local in focus, provides not only the satisfaction of broad research purposes, but also important tools for prudent decision making. In his academic career James Spradley challenged those who undertook ethnographic research projects to do so with the purpose of improving the human environment. In a modest way, this study hopes to orient others, too, toward that goal.
APPENDIX A

TECHNICAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE PRODUCTION OF RELIABLE MECHANICAL RECORDINGS
SOME TECHNICAL NOTES

A significant portion of this study was based on the analysis of service encounters between student assistants and library users recorded on videotape. The task of producing videotapes adequate for this purpose was frustrating and a number of combinations of equipment were experimented with before the right arrangement was found. Below are noted the technical aspects of making these recordings. It is hoped this information will assist others should they endeavor to attempt a similar study.

THE CAMCORDER

While there are a variety of videocameras available, it was decided to purchase a full-featured machine which would allow for flexibility in filming. The camcorder used in this study was a Sylvania VHS Model VCC157AV01. This model contains a date and time display option which can permanently place this information at the bottom corner of the screen. This feature was of particular value during the inspection of the 144 hours of videotapes when frequent playback was necessary.
While this camcorder has a built-in microphone, it was inadequate to record conversations some seventy feet away. Using the jack at the base of the microphone, a long microphone cable was used to connect a distant microphone. If taping is to occur in a setting with fluorescent lighting, it is imperative that the microphone cable be a shielded type otherwise the lighting system's interference will drown out all other sound under a loud hum (an unshielded cable becomes, in effect, an antenna for such signals).

THE MICROPHONE

The microphone used was a Sony model F-25S. This model is a cardioid microphone, whose range is 180 degrees in front of the microphone. It was suspended inconspicuously from the ceiling along side a light fixture. The extension cable connecting the microphone to the videocamera was strung above the library's removable ceiling tiles.

RECORDINGS

The present state-of-the-art of compact camcorders is such that the tapes that most produce are recorded at "SP" (standard play) speed (2 hours per tape). To reduce the number of videotapes produced during this
study, a videocassette recorder was placed on a small cart adjacent to the tripod-mounted camcorder. The signal output from the camcorder was routed to the videorecorder and videotapes at "EP" (extended play) speed (6 hours per tape). While this was a satisfactory arrangement, a cassette always needed to be in the camcorder and had to be changed every two hours.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH "ALICIA," A STUDENT ASSISTANT

(TWENTY PAGE EXCERPT)
Interview with Alicia

INT: Well, we're here on the first of March, 1989 with Alicia. And...thank you for coming in today to talk with me today about this research project that I'm engaged in. As you know, what I am looking at is how student assistants contribute to the provision of public service in the library here. In a small academic library like ourselves. And before I go into the specific research questions that I had in mind, I'd like to get a little background about you. If we could spend a few minutes we'll get that out of the way (both chuckle).

Alicia: Get that over with! (Laughs)

INT: Tell me, where did you attend high school?

Alicia: [deleted to preserve confidentiality].

INT: Okay. Are you from [deleted to preserve confidentiality]

Alicia: No (laughs), I'm from [deleted to preserve confidentiality], Ohio.
INT: Oh, that's right.

Alicia: About thirty-five miles away from [deleted to preserve confidentiality].

INT: Okay. And what was your experience there? Did you enjoy it? It was a small school--

Alicia: Yes--Very small school. We had twenty in the graduating class.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: When I graduated. It was, I don't know, it was a little more difficult that actually public school.

INT: Um hum.

Alicia: You're taught by nuns. You're taught much better manners.

INT: Yes.

Alicia: In a private school.
INT: Did you get slapped on the knuckles?

Alicia: No, never slapped on the knuckles? You would get detention if you had anything. The biggest adjustment was when we came to college.

INT: Um hum.

Alicia: I'd always want to stand up when the professors walked in, because that's what we had to do in high school.

INT: Yeah.

Alicia: As soon as an adult walks in the room, you have to stand up.
BIG ADJUSTMENT ON THAT ONE! I'M LIKE, HOLDING ONTO MY DESK! TRYING NOT TO STAND UP! (Both laugh). And the uniforms, are better, change, --sure ugly.

INT: You mean you actually wore a uniform all through your high school years?

Alicia: Yes! Short skirt, plaid, hunter green, if you
can even picture a color, hunter green! Knee socks, no pants.

INT: Oh, I didn't realize that!

Alicia: Oh yes.
INT: Well, so you've been at Otterbein for three years.

Alicia: Three years.
INT: Okay, you're a junior.

Alicia: Yes.

INT: And you've been here at the library for?

Alicia: All three years!

INT: Okay, before me!

Alicia: Before you! (both laugh)

INT: Um, and I was wondering, and I've asked the people who have been working here in the library, what really, what made up your mind to start working here in the library? Can you remember?
Alicia: (Laughs). I've always like the books. I knew before I even came here that I was going to try to get a library job.

INT: Okay, good.
Alicia: I always wanted to work in the public library but I was always too scared to go down and do it.
INT: Work in the public library, you mean, in, in [deleted to preserve confidentiality]
Alicia: In [deleted to preserve confidentiality], yes, during the summer or something. But I did volunteer work instead.

INT: You did?

Alicia: Um hum.

INT: In the public library?

Alicia: No.

INT: Oh volunteer work--

Alicia: Not doing library work.
INT: Okay. I was wondering, I didn't know --

Alicia: I did library work in junior high school.

INT: Okay, that was another question I was going to ask you, did you work in another library? So in your junior high school library, you worked.


INT: Public school.

Alicia: Public school as opposed to private.

INT: I've got you! Okay. Well, you've been here for three years, and one wonders what keeps people in a place. And what has, what has really drawn you to the library? To keep you here for three years.

Alicia: Well, I was thinking of a sarcastic answer as to what didn't, but (both laugh) --
INT: You can do whatever you want! (laughs).

Alicia: I was going to say, well the pay isn't. (laughs)
INT: Well, that's a good point, that's a good point.

Alicia: I mean you make so much more money just doing a regular job.

INT: Yes.
Alicia: Um, what's kept me here. I think working with people.

INT: Um hum.

Alicia: I like the variety.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: I don't think I'd be comfortable just sitting in a little room, pushing papers around. My dad wants me to work in the Education office and I think I wouldn't get enough variety to do that.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: I know a lot more people by working in the library than I would squirreled in the fourth floor of Towers! [Note: Towers Hall].
INT: Um hum, well that's true. That's good. So uh you've really found this interaction with people an important part staying here.

Alicia: Yes. 'Till I go about trying to find jobs! (laughs)

INT: Okay (laughs). Okay. Alright. Well, I mentioned previously that this research focus that I've arranged here for my research study, is the question of how library assistants provide public service. And I wonder, in your own words, how would you describe the term public service in a library?

Alicia: For public service in a library, I would describe it as somebody being able to help somebody that's have difficulty finding something or just getting started in what they're trying to do.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: And being there just, just to hear them out! I guess.

INT: Okay, as you think of that term, do any thing, do any other kinds of services come to mind?
Alicia: For public service?

INT: Um hum.

Alicia: Well, doing all that volunteer work, I think that has a lot to do with it.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: And, um, really, anything that deals with people.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: Is public service.

INT: Does that suggest that you need certain kinds of skills that might be separate from, um, knowledge of procedures?

Alicia: Yes, I think you do. You have to be able to talk to people, you have to be friendly enough for them to ask you questions. And, be knowledgeable, I mean, books and stuff, to find something for them, but, also, be able to communicate with them.
INT: Okay, alright, good. Anything else?

Alicia: Umm, not that I can think off hand (laughs).

INT: Well, uh--

Alicia: My mind's like "Huh?"
INT: And in public service in a library, uh, what do you think about your attitude towards libraries in general? If you're going to work here?

Alicia: I don't know.
INT: But is that a good trait? I mean, is that an important trait?
Alicia: By working in the library?

INT: To work in the library, in effect.

Alicia: (Laughs).

INT: (Laughs) You have to, you have to like the environment!

Alicia: Oh yeah, well, if you didn't like working with books or with people or something like that you'd
probably be very bored, very dull, not be able to help
people as much as you possibly can.

INT: Okay. Good. Well, uh, if you can think back for a
moment three years ago, when you first started working
here.

Alicia: That's the hard part! (laughs) I can't think
back from yesterday!

INT: Well, uh, was it easy to get used to the
procedures that you had to master to work here?

Alicia: Most of them.

INT: Alright.

Alicia: I had difficulty, I remember, it took me a
couple, a little, you know, a few days to master
getting out periodicals. Getting the dates and little
numbers, how many copies. And government documents I'm
still pretty clueless on. I know what they are and I
know how to find the call number, and how to find them
up on the shelves, but if anybody asked me a question
about them, I wouldn't know how to handle that.

INT: What would you do if, if you had a question you
couldn't answer?

Alicia: Refer them to the librarian on duty.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: Or, if they're not near enough, find some librarian that's close enough to get help.

INT: Okay, great, great. Um, so basically the uh government documents have taken you, continue to take you--

Alicia: I don't know how to use 'em! (laughs)

INT: Alright (chuckles) and uh, then the procedures for circulation of periodicals.

Alicia: That, yeah, that began with, I mean. They had you trained right on the spot. I like that better than what they're doing now, or what they do now.

INT: Okay, now I'd like you to speak to that. What, is it, uh, there's a difference between training you beforehand and training you on the spot.
Alicia: I think training you on the spot helps you learn it faster. You know, it helps you pick it up. It's like when you write things you learn it better than just hearing it.

INT: Um hum. Okay. So practice makes perfect?
Alicia: Right.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: I mean, you can talk to them, and they can hear you, but that's not going to tell them how to do it. Or when something needs to be done. Or how something should be done. Etcet'ra.

INT: Um kay. Alright. So that would, can you then describe the, the best way that you can think of to do the training? How would that actually occur.

Alicia: I would just match up somebody that's worked here awhile with a new student.

INT: Okay.
Alicia: Have the new student work at that time with whoever's on duty, and have that, the older student go over the rules and everything that needs to be done as it comes in. And when they have free time, go over things that can be shown by example, like pamphlets and maps and government documents.

INT: Okay. So in other words have someone just, a knowledgeable person there on duty, and have that person sort of looking over the shoulder of the one?

Alicia: Right, Have them do it and then, be able to help them when they need help. But, they, they essentially do it themselves.


Alicia: But I mean the librarians don't need to take up their time.

INT: Right.

Alicia: They have other things to do, I'm sure!

(laughs)

INT: Yeah, Okay, um, that was a question I was going to
ask. If, if you could change the way things are done or have been done that is one of the things you'd change.

Alicia: Oh I remember, excuse me, something from before, that I hated.

INT: Yes.
Alicia: Filing! (laughs)

INT: Okay.
Alicia: The dots and the dashes always got me confused and the commas and the titles. But we don't have to do that anymore! So that eliminates that problem!

INT: Would that be difficult for you to, uh,
Alicia: Teach?

INT: Do you ever have to explain that to people?
Alicia: Yes.

INT: How the catalog works?
Alicia: I had to do that to a patron
INT: Yes.

Alicia: Not too long ago. They were trying to find ah some special disorders or something like that. They looked under disorders-- they, they didn't look far enough back. And I explained how it worked and everything. I mean, I know how to do it.

INT: Yes.

Alicia: Know that if you don't find it immediately, keep going, you'll eventually come across it.

INT: Um hum. So that was a difficult thing for you to do?

Alicia: To learn it?

INT: Well, not only to learn it, but

Alicia: But explain it?

INT: To explain it.

Alicia: A little bit, but, not as much as it would have been the first year. (laughs)
INT: Alright, um, well, um. Tell me about the things that you do and think in a broad sense, things that you do at the circulation desk, which fall into this category of public service. And if you can be--

Alicia: Specific?

INT: You know, a few of the things that you do.

Alicia: Just by being able to answer their questions.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: Um, giving directions.

INT: Um hum.

Alicia: Ahh, just talking to the students when they come in. They just say hi, or whatever, and even people you don’t know, they’ll come up and say hi. (laughs)

INT: Public relations?

Alicia: Right. And ah, students talk to you when you give them money or change. When they pay a fine,
etcet'ra. And when you answer the questions when the librarian's not around.

INT: Yes.

Alicia: Or if you know them, that's the best way, knowing them without having to ask a librarian.

INT: What do you think about that? Ah, some of the students I've talked to have different, differing feelings about answering a question if they know it and they--

Alicia: If I know it, I might as well answer it. Why pass the buck if I can give an answer as to where to find something?

INT: Okay. Has that ever gotten you in trouble?

Alicia: Not yet.

INT: Okay, alright.

Alicia: I mean--
INT: I mean, you haven't been called on that, on answering a question then?

Alicia: No.

INT: Okay.

Alicia: If I come to the, a problem where I answer a question, and they still can't find something, or if they need more, then I'll refer them to a librarian.


Alicia: Just when anybody comes to the desk, you're there, you're there for public service. I mean that's why you're sitting there, or doing whatever.

INT: Um hum.

Alicia: And you give up whatever you're doing to help that person.

INT: Okay.
Alicia: And they know that you're going to be there if they need something.

INT: Okay. Uh, the things that you've just described are the things that happen frequently.

Alicia: Very frequently. (laughs)

Int: Can you think of things that happen less frequently but still are in your mind?
Alicia: I 'member one weird question, but, I don't think, it doesn't have anything to do with the library.

Int: Okay. Well, but then--

Alicia: It's just an out of the ordinary question, that, I mean, some guy asked me where a hotel was! I mean it was like, well! I mean, it was so off the wall! (laughs)

Int: How did you answer the question?

Alicia: I told him! (laughs)

Int: Okay. That's not unusual. That's not unusual.
APPENDIX C

SERVICE ENCOUNTERS/ACTIVITIES (N= 4010)

RECORDED FROM VIDEOTAPE INDEXING PROCEDURE
Service Encounters/Activities Recorded
March 28-May 30, 1988
(n= 4010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Book return</td>
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Fine payment ................................................... 12
Fine payment (patron migrates) ............................... 10
Fine payment (patron migrates to west counter) ........... 2
Fine payment (multiple patrons) ............................. 4
Fine payment and reference question ....................... 1
Friendly conversation .......................................... 96
Friendly conversation (patron migrates) ..................... 9
Friendly conversation (multiple patrons) .................... 14
Inter-patron communications .................................. 19
Inter-patron communications (patron migrates) ............ 2
Inter-staff communications ................................... 3
LRC material return ........................................... 1
Library business ................................................ 2
Library information ............................................ 66
Library information (patron migrates) ....................... 13
Library information (patron migrates to west counter) .... 2
Library information (multiple patrons) ..................... 12
Make change ................................................... 328
Make change (large bill) ....................................... 1
Make change (patron migrates) ............................... 21
Make change (patron migrates to west counter) ............ 34
Make change (multiple patrons) .............................. 27
Make change (multiple patrons migrate) .................... 1
Make change (self) ............................................ 1
Make change and friendly conversation ...................... 2
Make change and library information ......................... 5
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Make change and special request ............................. 1
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APPENDIX D

SAMPLE OF HAND CODED VIDEOTAPE CONTENT INDEX
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<td>1135</td>
<td>Req for Res</td>
<td>Female pos 2</td>
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<td>1136</td>
<td>Req for Res</td>
<td>Male, pos 3</td>
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<td>Female pos 4½</td>
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APPENDIX E

COMPUTER-GENERATED REPORTS CONSTRUCTED FROM
VIDEOTAPE CONTENT INDEX FORMS
(SAMPLES)
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Figure 35
Service Encounters Arranged by Regular Chronology
(dBaseIII Report)
### Figure 36
Service Encounters Arranged by Encounter Type
(Alphabetically by Encounter Type)
(dBaseIII Report)

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>9:33</td>
<td>4073 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>(a) JLC</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>9:29</td>
<td>2782 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>(a) Stacy</td>
<td>T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>3693 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>Mary Ellen</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/2</td>
<td>9:05</td>
<td>3091 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/25</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>2078 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>JLC</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>f</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/25</td>
<td>8:24</td>
<td>2997 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>6:18</td>
<td>670 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>(a) Patti</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/26</td>
<td>6:22</td>
<td>250 C/O Reg Bk (avs)</td>
<td>(a) Linnette</td>
<td>T.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>6:45</td>
<td>721 C/O Reg Bk (avs1.5)</td>
<td>Mary Ellen</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>9:47</td>
<td>3865 C/O Reg Bk (staff)</td>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29</td>
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<td>2098 C/O Reg Bk</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8:57</td>
<td>2921 C/O Reg Bk</td>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td>T.</td>
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<td>4.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>COUNT</td>
<td>TRANSACTION</td>
<td>LIBN</td>
<td>STUDENT SEX</td>
<td>POS</td>
<td>COST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>7:50</td>
<td>1321</td>
<td>C/O Reg Bk</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>7:59</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Ref Q</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
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<td>2085</td>
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<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
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<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.T.</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2193</td>
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<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>8:39</td>
<td>2224</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>8:39</td>
<td>2224</td>
<td>Res Ret</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>8:42</td>
<td>2255</td>
<td>Res Req (m)</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>8:44</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>Res Req (avs)</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>8:53</td>
<td>2388</td>
<td>Change (avs)</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<td>8:55</td>
<td>2411</td>
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<td>.F.</td>
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<td>2501</td>
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<td>Patti</td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<td>9:08</td>
<td>2555</td>
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<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<td>2570</td>
<td>Open Res Req (avs)</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<td>9:10</td>
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<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>9:17</td>
<td>2657</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 37**

Service Encounters Arranged by Assisting Staff Member
(Arranged Alphabetically by Library Personnel)
(dBase III Report)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
<th>TRANSACTION</th>
<th>LIBN</th>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>POS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/3</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>Inter Patron Comm</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>2612</td>
<td>Lib Info *</td>
<td>Kris</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1748</td>
<td>Overdue Bk Ret &amp; FP</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>2586</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1396</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1722</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/25</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>2558</td>
<td>Res Req</td>
<td>Linnette</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1404</td>
<td>Res Req (a)</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/18</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1663</td>
<td>Res Req (mvs)</td>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>7:57</td>
<td>1743</td>
<td>Res Ret</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7:57</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>Bk Ret</td>
<td>Linnette</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>C/O Reg Bk</td>
<td>Ron (self)</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/16</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>2650</td>
<td>C/O Reg Bk (a) (mvs)</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>2671</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>Copier Assist Instr</td>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td>.T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>7:58</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>Dictionary</td>
<td>.F.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Figure 38
Service Encounters Arranged by Time
(Arranged by Hour and Minute over 36 Videotaped Evenings)
(dBaseIII Report)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>TRANSACTION</th>
<th>LIBN</th>
<th>STUDENT SEX</th>
<th>POS</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>7:39</td>
<td>1731 Res Ret</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:08</td>
<td>1839 Bk Ret</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:12</td>
<td>1891 Res Req</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:16</td>
<td>1935 Change</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:28</td>
<td>2088 Res Ret</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:31</td>
<td>2126 Sp Req</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:32</td>
<td>2137 Res Req (avs)</td>
<td>Stacy .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:35</td>
<td>2170 Ref Q</td>
<td>Brenda .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:37</td>
<td>2196 Change</td>
<td>Stacy .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:39</td>
<td>2219 Res Req</td>
<td>Stacy .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>8:41</td>
<td>2241 Res Req (avs)</td>
<td>Phyllis .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
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<td>2305 Res Req</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
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<td>5/31</td>
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<td>2690 C/O Reg Bk</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
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<td>5/31</td>
<td>9:29</td>
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<td>Stacy .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/28</td>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>2350 Friendly Convers (e)</td>
<td>Tanny .T.</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>2.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>8:25</td>
<td>3045 C/O Reg Bks (avs)</td>
<td>Leah .T.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>6:45</td>
<td>604 Sp Req Purchase</td>
<td>Patti .F.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2.25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 39
Service Encounters Arranged by Patron Position Number (Showing Point of Initiation of Service Encounters) (dBaseIII Report)
APPENDIX F

INCLUDED TERMS DERIVED FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
Unstructured Included Terms Derived from Interviews with Student Assistants

ADP students
Agreeable tasks
Approaches for service
Bibliographic instruction
Card catalog
Change (money)
Change in attitude
Check out
Children, dealing with
Comfortable--when SAs feel most
Consequences
Copy machine(s)
Copy machine maintenance
Courtesy cards
Delivery system
Desensitizing machine
Directional assistance
Distinguishing user types
Dress codes for SAs
Early SA work experiences
End of shift
Evening activity level
Extremely kind patrons
External factors
Extreme circumstance
Favors, special
Feeling of accomplishment
Feelings
Fines
Flirtatiousness
Food and drink problems
Fraternities
Friends, relations with
Gender issues
Getting prepared
Government documents
Homework
Initiative
Jocks
Knowing the patrons
Librarians (profession)
Librarians, relation with
Library environment
Library user qualities
Library user types
Library users
Library users' perceptions
Library users—why they come
Microfiche and microfilm
Nursing students
Organization
Outsiders
Phone calls
Politeness
Power
Preferential treatment (among SAs)
Pressure
Problem(s)
Problem patrons
Professors
Public service definition
Reference questions
Reserves
Rules
Rules, enforcement of
Saying no
Student assistants—coping strategies
Student assistants—detail work
Student assistants—follow up
Student assistants—initiative
Student assistants—negative work attitudes
Student assistants—perceptions of co-workers
Student assistants—perceptions of job
Student assistants—perception of patrons
Student assistants—perceptions of role
Student assistants—perception of time
Student assistants—perception of users
Student assistants—positive characteristics
Student assistants—reasons for staying
Student assistants—reasons for working
Student assistants—relations outside library
Student assistants—relations with co-workers
Student assistants—responsibilities
Student assistants—use of library
Student assistants—use of space
Student assistants, what doesn't bother them
Security system
Seniority
Shelving
Signage
Socializing in the library
Stools
Student culture
Taking responsibility
Tedium
Territories
Things student assistants dislike
Things student assistants must know
Time
Time constraints
Time—fast time
Time—patterns in quarter
Time—patterns of library use
Time—slow time(s)
Time—utilization
Tools
Training
Training needs
Use of the library
User perceptions of library
What a librarian's good for
Working alone
Worst task in the world
APPENDIX G

DBASEIII REPORT PROVIDING ACCESS TO EMBEDDED INCLUDED TERMS IN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS (SAMPLE)
SAs perception of job

(When there's nothing to do) we feel we would rather be studying.
(When there's nothing to do) It seems like it's a waste of everybody's time, that we're sitting there not doing anything.
Prefers doing more or different activities, or whatever.
Good attitude about working in the library shows even when I'm not at work, "Oh well, I have to go to work now."

SAs perception of job

Working in the library isn't "causing a major disaster in my scheduling or anything.
I have a pretty good attitude about working in the library.
Time really seems drag on when the library is dead and there's nothing to do.
At different times of the day it's busier at the desk and at different times it's really slow.

SAs perception of time

It's really slow between 5-6 in the evening--there's almost nobody in the library. It's the dinner hour.
You can always tell when the library's gettin ready to close, 'cause everybody's headin' out the door. And very few people are coming in.

SAs perception of time

The desk gets busy right in between classes.
I think there's lot of time that's wasted.
People (SAs) don't do anything.
At beginning of the quarter there's not a lot to do. And you have basically have to do busy work.

SAs perception of time

A lot of people use the library in the evening to socialize and study and do whatever.

SAs perception of time

It's a lot noisier 'cause there's a lot more activity and a lot more movement.
A lot of people use the library in the morning and early afternoon hours for reading and research.

SAs perception of time

I think a lot, some people wait until the last minute to check out their books.
APPENDIX H

ACTIVITY CODES DERIVED FROM

STUDENT ASSISTANTS’ SELF DESCRIPTIONS
Kinds of Work Performed by
Student Assistants
Domain Analysis of Student Self-Descriptions

answer questions if we can
answer questions pertaining to periodical listings
answer questions pertaining to reference books
book checkout
book check in
check out open reserve materials
check out materials
check in books
check out closed reserve materials
check in materials
checking in library materials
checkout materials
close reserve checkout
closed reserves
dealing with students who come to
library to socialize, not study
dealing with rude patrons unwilling
to pay overdue fines
dealing belligerent students who can't
understand library functions
dealing with the public
dealing with security system alarms
dealing with college seniors who have never
been in the library before
give directions
give change for the copier
give directions to where materials are located
help patrons
operating the photocopy machine
overdues processing
patron contact duties
providing information for research
refer questions to full-time staff member
reference area
reference questions students can’t answer
requests for directions by patrons
waiting on patrons
APPENDIX I

MASTER ALPHABETICAL LIST OF OBSERVED AND REPORTED
STUDENT ASSISTANT DUTIES

376
Master List of Observed and Reported
Student Assistant Duties (Included Terms)

Answer simple questions
Answer questions if we can
Answer questions pertaining to periodical listings
Answer questions
Answer questions pertaining to reference books
Anything we do
Assessment
Being there
Book check in
Book return
Book checkout
Books, check out
Books, report whether checked out
Books, help locate
Boring work, relieve professional librarians of
Bridge, provide a between library users and professional
Buffer zone, act as a, between library users and
professionals
Campus phone book, loan
Card catalog instruction
Change (giving)
Change, making
Charge machines-operating
Check out book
Check out materials
Check in materials
Check in books
Check out
Check out government document
Check out open reserve materials
Check out closed reserve materials
Checking in library materials
Checking out materials
Children, coping with
Children, dealing with lost
Closed reserve checkout
Closed reserve instruction
Closed reserves
Closed reserve assistance
Comfortable, make library users feel
Copier assistance
Copier assistance—refund
Copier assistance—problem
Copier assistance—fill paper tray
Copier assistance—department charge
Copier assistance— instruction
Copier assistance— fill toner
Copy machine maintenance
Copy machine instruction
Copy machines, maintain
Copy machine operation
Courtesy card issuing
Dealing with the public
Dealing with college seniors who have never been in the
library before
Dealing with security system alarms
Dealing w/problem patron
Dealing with rude patrons unwilling to pay overdue fines
Dealing with students who come to library to socialize,
not study
Dealing with belligerent students who can’t understand
library functions
Delivery service
Desensitizing machine opn
Dictionary use
Directional question
Directional questions
Equipment malfunction
Explain periodical indexes
Fine enforcement
Fine collection
Fine payment
Fines, collect
Friendly conversation
Getting materials
Give directions to where materials are located
Give change for the copier
Give directions
Giving directions
Go-between, act as a, between library users and
professionals
Govt. Docs., mastering
Hearing people out
Help patrons
Helping people with whatever they need
Helping people the best way we can
Helping people out
Helping people find things
Helping people find resources
Helping people find materials
Helping with periodical indexes
Helping people find information
Helping people find answers
Information, provide
Instruction re: reserves
Inter-patron communication
Inter-staff communication
Just being here
Library security
Library information
Loan campus student director
Loan paper
Loan elevator key
Loan students things
Lost and found
Lost and found service
LRC material return
Magazines, help locate
Make change
Microfilm/fiche machine instruction
Microfilm/fiche handling
Microfilm/microfiche machines, mechanical upkeep
Miscellaneous information
Mundane, stupid things, do
Open reserve request
Operating the photocopy machine
Overdue book return
Overdues processing
Overdues, handling
Page for library patron
patron contact duties
Periodical request
Periodical check out
Periodical return
Phone calls
Phone call (outgoing)
Phone call (incoming)
Place holds on books
Point out resources
Providing information for research
Questions (basic), answer
Refer questions to full-time staff member
Refer patrons to librarians
Reference collection instruction
Reference question
Reference questions students can’t answer
Reference area
Requests for directions by patrons
Reserve service
Reserve return
Reserve request
Reserve information
Reserves, get
Rules, enforcement
Rules, explaining to patrons
Security system
Security system
Security problem
Security system violation
Security system repair
Security system disable
Security system
Special request--pick-up
Special request--purchase
Special requests
Stapler, loan
Sympathy, treat other students with (forgive fines)
Take messages
Talk to students
Talk to library patrons
Telling how to find call#
Telling where things are
Telling where to look
Waiting on patrons
Working with patrons
APPENDIX J

MEMORANDUM CONCERNING APPROVED STUDENT ASSISTANT INFORMATION PROVISION
To: The Student Staff:

Starting a new job is somewhat nerve-wracking and fitting work into your busy schedules isn't easy. Likewise, doing the same job for four years might make you think the "same old routine" isn't too exciting. We will schedule your hours to work during spring quarter after March 3. Two other "happenings" are coming up and I wanted to let you know. New staff members will have a chance to learn filing rules for the card catalog, and the highlights of the Government Document section. Sophomores and Seniors will be evaluated on how they do their jobs.

Evaluations of job performance are a time to hear what good things you've been doing as well as a time to receive constructive criticism. All the full-time staff members who work with you participate in the evaluations and a sample rating form is attached to clarify the behaviors and skills we consider to be most important in fulfilling our mission of service to the Otterbein community. The evaluations are kept on file, so there will be a record of your work for future references, and you do get to see and comment on what we have to say about you.

Your job is vital to our library. The students talk to you first, and your attitude gives them a good or bad impression of the rest of us. If you answer their questions correctly and direct them to the right librarian or the best resource, then we've provided good service. There is a fine line between answering a reference question and providing directional assistance. We ask that you do not answer reference questions and to ease confusion, we've written some guidelines to help you.

Other aspects of your job, such as shelving, typing, processing books, cleaning up, or shelf reading are just as important. There is a lot of information in this building and without your steady and accurate work, students and faculty wouldn't be able to find what they need.

We are glad you are here, and hope you'll enjoy being a part of our staff.

COURTESY AND COMMUNICATION

We are here to serve, so always be courteous to patrons. A smile and greeting will let patrons know they are welcome and that no question is "dumb" and we will do our best to find what they need.

HOW TO DEAL WITH QUESTIONS

Student staff should:

1. Answer basic directional questions, such as:
   "Where can I find this book, PN 630 .H5?"
   "Where is a Thesaurus?"
   "Where is the Business Periodicals Index?"
2. Refer all reference questions to a full-time staff member. (These are questions requiring a staff member to look up information.)
   "How can I find information on Amos?"
   "Do you have any square dancing records?"
   "When did Eisenhower die?"
   "How do I put this article in a footnote?"
3. Refer all questions regarding circulation problems (e.g. fines, overdue, damaged or lost materials) to the full-time staff member on duty with you.
4. Refer requests for courtesy cards to the librarian on duty.
5. Refer people who are angry about our policies to the librarian on duty or even the head librarian. You don't have to be the target of their anger.
6. Try to express referrals in positive terms. The response "Mrs. Wilson can help you with that." is better than "We aren't allowed to answer that."

TELEPHONE

Answer the phone in a pleasant voice and say "Otterbein Library - Circulation" or, "Otterbein Library - Periodicals." First responsibility for answering the phone is the librarian's. If he or she is busy, please answer the phone. Use the same criteria for answering questions on the phone that you use for patrons at the desk. If the librarian is busy, take an accurate message, so the person can be called.

During working hours you should not make personal phone calls. If there is an emergency, please ask the librarian about using the phone, and then try to use a phone other than the ones at the circulation or periodicals desks. We don't want to tie up the lines.

JOB PRIORITIES

People waiting at the desk do take priority over phone calls.

You are staffing the circulation desk and that is your first priority. At times it is busy—the phone is ringing and people are waiting to check out books or reserves, or to ask about a fine. Your job is to handle the circulation of materials, and the librarian's job is to take the time and know various resources so that the patron's actual needs are met. You may think you know the answer, but please refer reference questions.

If things are slow at the desk and you are given some job to do—that job is always to be done with an "eye on the desk." Watch for people who need service. We count on you to be there, so we can pay more attention to patron's questions, and really concentrate on what they need. If necessary the librarian may want to take that person to a reference source and spend some time helping them find the information.

If you are going to leave the desk, just let the librarian know. Try to stay until your replacement comes. If you must go, tell the librarian.

If you are a few minutes late for work, stay a few extra minutes to work your full hour. During the day, report to work at 5 minutes before the hour. At 5:00 and after during the week, and on week-ends, report to work on the hour.
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