Rationale

Seven different models of carrel solutions including single-sided, individual, and table varieties were displayed on the first floor of the Library. The UX Team set out to uncover which carrel users preferred and why.

Research Method

1. Conducted quick interviews with users who were either already sitting in one of the carrels or passing by the area and willing to participate. --- 22 responses
2. Posted pictures on social media of each carrel and asked users to vote (solely based on the aesthetics) on which carrel they preferred. See email attachment for Snapchat post. --- 13 votes
3. Included the UX email address on carrel signage asking users to email us their thoughts on the carrels. --- 1 response

Total # of responses: 36

The research was conducted from Tuesday May 16th to Friday May 19th. Because there were multiple methods of participating in this study, you will see a difference in the number of responses for each question. As incentive, participants names will be entered into a draw to win a $10 hospitality gift card.

Findings

*** See email attachment (video) for the legend which pictures each carrel and their assigned number ***
Interesting Comments:

- The preference for carrel #5 is slightly misleading. Several users interviewed were return visitors and because #5 was initially the only carrel with power (and a working light), these users simply assumed that, after an initial check, the other carrels didn’t have power. So they kept returning to #5.
  - “I decided on here [carrel #5] because this table and #7 were the first tables that were set up properly with the outlets working so I have been coming to this one for the past week.”
- The reasons why users chose carrel #4 and #2:
  - “There seems to be more space in these ones to spread out. I like that it’s private. People aren’t looking at my work and it helps me to focus. The height of the walls is enough to provide privacy but not so high that you feel too enclosed. I like to be able to see other people doing work too. It motivates me.”
  - “I like the walls and the privacy that I have here. If I sit at a table there isn’t the same amount of space and I’m worried about spreading out too much or someone else doing the same and taking up two spots.”

Which individual carrel do you like the best?

21 responses

- #1 Single Carrel A - Light Coloured: 71.4%
- #2 Single Carrel B - Dark Coloured: 28.6%

Interesting Comments:

- Users overwhelmingly preferred the dark coloured single carrel for various reasons.
  - “The light seems more subtle. It’s not right in your face like the light coloured one.”
  - “The light coloured one looks cheap.”
  - “I just prefer the dark tone.”
  - “There is not enough contrast between the light coloured wood and the white paper I’m usually working with.”
  - “I like the higher walls with the shelf. It seems more closed off and easier to focus in. Less distractions.”
Interesting Comments:

- The reasons why users liked carrel #3:
  - "I hate cubicles. I like the more open options with the lights and outlets."
  - "#3 just makes sense for group work. I especially like having the light and outlet."

- The reasons why users did not choose carrel #6:
  - "#6 is like all of the others but with no lights, so why would I?"
  - "#6 is in an awkward location, right behind that pillar. So right away I'm not into it."

- Again, most users at carrel #5 were there because they were return users and assumed it was the only carrel that had power. Here are some other thoughts on carrel #5:
  - "This one is at the back [of the room]. I don't know I just like it here."
  - "#5 has a false sense of a barrier. It's not as aesthetically appealing as the others. Both 5 and 7 feel flimsy and with the outlet right on the desk it's a waste space."

What do users think about carrel #7 (single-side solution)?

- In general, carrel #7 was not a popular choice for various reasons.
  - Users want the option of having a light.
  - Users didn't want to study facing a wall. Users responded more positively to the option of carrel #7 being in front of a window.
  - The removable partitions were a concern. (These sentiments can also be applied to carrel #5).
    - "The idea of the movable walls is smart, but I think they could be easily abused, because people would just give themselves more space, or the walls would just disappear."
    - "I wish the back [removable partitions] was continued down the middle. The gap between the wall and the divider is weird. Why doesn't it go all the way back?"
    - "I wouldn't recommend the removable stuff because it would probably break easily."
“Those removable walls might be problematic and inconvenient. Like I’m not sure what to do if there is no wall up and someone is already sitting there. It would be weird to put that up between us.”

“I hate #7. It is ugly and it doesn’t really have a good divider which is the main thing I look for in a carrel.”

Summary

● Users want options in their study spaces. Often users assumed that the carrel tables (excluding carrel #4 with the sides) would be located on the group study floors. These were common sentiments:
  ○ “The context is really important for me. For example, I like #3 and #6 for group study but not for doing individual work. If I had to really buckle down and write an essay I’d choose #4 or #2.”
  ○ “I use carrels with the walls when I’m writing a paper because I need 100% quiet and need that really private space. I like the table options for group floors and for doing group work.”
  ○ “I often go to the Library with my friends to study but we are working on different stuff independently. Like we just like to sit beside each other, so these table [#3 and #6] would work for me.”

● Users prefer individual carrel #2 (dark coloured) to carrel #1 (light coloured) because it is more in line with a traditional carrel. The higher walls and shelf on the top give them more privacy which allows them to focus more easily and avoid distractions. They also preferred the dark colour.

● Users were excited to see that all options had outlets and multiple USB ports.

● Carrels #2, #3, and #4 were the most popular options.

● Carrel #5 and #7 were the least popular options.