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What’s the difference?

Reducing noise in the academic library: The effectiveness of installing noise meters

Abstract

Purpose: The objective of this research was to explore the effect of an electronic noise-monitoring device (Neslegnis) on reducing noise levels in quiet study areas in an academic library.

Design/methodology/approach: Surveys and detailed level measurements were used to measure the perceived and objective noise levels respectively, and after the installation of the Neslegris in each of these areas and in a control area of the main library. The perceived perception of noise was measured with a passive paper survey and online survey, which asked students to rate the current noise level and their desired noise level. The actual noise measurements were collected twice, a day, for a 15-second period with a handheld noise meter and then compared after the installation of the Neslegris in each area.

Findings: The Neslegris had no statistically significant effect on either actual noise levels or user perceptions of noise in the library. Survey comments and anecdotal observations during the test sessions, while objective measurements, did reveal that noise in the quiet study areas was not the principal source of complaints.

Originality/value: In view of the research problem in reducing noise in libraries, there has been very little research in this area. This is the first study to examine the effectiveness of using a noise-monitoring device to reduce noise levels in an academic library.

Keywords: Noise, quiet study, library spaces, noise reduction

Introduction

Noise in libraries is a constant source of concern for library users and administrators. This survey reports on the installation of a non-invasive noise-monitoring device (Neslegris) in an academic library, a large university located in Montreal, Canada. The Neslegris is a non-invasive, passive, and inexpensive device that uses sound analysis to identify the source of noise. The library was divided into two main areas: the quiet study areas and the open areas. The Neslegris was installed in each of these areas, and the objective measurements were collected before and after the installation. The survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of the users of the library. The survey questions were related to the users' experience with the Neslegris and their perceptions of the impact on the study environment.

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