

# Observational Study: Rubenstein Photography Gallery

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## Summary

An observational study of the Rubenstein Photography gallery was conducted from March 9th, 2016 to April 13th, 2016. It was observed that the majority of people passing through the gallery seem to use it mainly as a thoroughfare as opposed to a “destination”, with only 25.85% looking at the exhibit. “Looking at the exhibit” was defined as someone who looked at the exhibit as they passed through as well as those who stopped to interact with it. Additional publicity and signs on the library’s efforts to increase research visibility in the reading rooms could increase exhibit driven traffic, specifically in the form of vinyl lettering on the glass walls of the research room. Individuals who chose to remain in the gallery spent an average of 2 minutes and 43 seconds in the space, with the majority of them spending less than 60 seconds there. An unexpected percentage of individuals were observed peering into classrooms and reading rooms, potentially curious about the use of those rooms.

## Background

Hannah Hiles and Hannah Pope, field experience students in the Assessment & User Experience Department, conducted an observational study in the Rubenstein Photography Gallery from March 9th, 2016 to April 13th, 2016. Observations were made in sessions of varying length and only regarding individuals passing through the gallery. Data was collected using Suma<sup>2</sup>.

Individuals can enter the Photography Gallery from the main lobby of Rubenstein library as well as the Sperling Lobby. From the Photography Gallery, several classrooms and reading rooms can be accessed. The photography gallery contains rotating art galleries with supplemental materials (pamphlets, short films, and occasionally printed books) and 4 benches for gallery visitors to utilize. One observation was conducted immediately after the opening of a new exhibit (“Where We Live: A North Carolina Portrait” on March 5th), which could account for the uptick in traffic on March 9th. Additionally, one observation was completed during Spring Break, likely resulting in a lower volume of traffic. It was also observed during the first study that some individuals entering the gallery space took intense notice of Pope and Hiles, potentially altering their behavior in the space (walking around where Pope and Hiles were sitting, looking at what Pope and Hiles were looking at, etc).

The total number of observations made was 286 over three hours and 31 minutes, on three separate days.

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<sup>1</sup>For more information, please contact [emily.daly@duke.edu](mailto:emily.daly@duke.edu)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reports/suma>

**Questions we hoped to answer through the study include the following:**

1. What percentage of people walking through the Photography Gallery stop to look at the exhibit?
2. How many people interact with the gallery in ways other than just looking at the photos?
3. How much time do people spend in the gallery, observing exhibits or otherwise?
4. Are there any unexpected behaviors observed by individuals walking through the gallery?

**Table 1. Observation Sessions in Photography Gallery**

Date	Duration	Start Time	End Time	Observations
March 9, 2016	90 minutes	12:20PM	1:50PM	175
March 17, 2016	49 minutes	12:30PM	1:19PM	38
April 13, 2016	60 minutes	2:30PM	3:30PM	73

**Key Findings**

**1. What percentage of people walking through the Photography Gallery stop to look at the exhibit?**

Of the 286 observations made, 76 (25.85%) looked at the exhibit. This includes individuals who clearly intended to stop and observe the exhibit, as well as those who stared at the exhibit pieces while walking through. Individuals who gave the exhibit a passing glance were not counted.

**2. How many people interact with the gallery in ways other than just looking at the photos?**

- 9 (3.06%) entered the classrooms or reading rooms
- 8 (2.72%) read signage
- 5 (1.70%) sat in the gallery
- 2 (0.68%) watched the films

It was anticipated that some individuals would use the phone receiver to listen to the documentary footage, but this action was not observed. Likewise, it was anticipated that some individuals would want to take pamphlets from the gallery space, but this was also an unobserved activity.

**3. How much time do people spend in the gallery, observing exhibits or otherwise?**

A total of 3 hours, 31 minutes was spent observing the gallery space. Out of that time, 63 minutes were spent by individuals remaining in the space, either observing the gallery, sitting on benches, interacting with the gallery, or performing some other action. Individuals spent an average of 2 minutes and 43 seconds in the space, with 64% of them spending less than 60 seconds there.

**4. Are there any unexpected behaviors observed by individuals walking through the gallery?**

- 9 (8.1%) of 111 individuals were observed looking into classrooms and reading room spaces on the final two days of observing

During the first day of observing the gallery, it was noted that a number of individuals spent time looking into the classrooms and reading room located off of the gallery space. Even if these individuals never entered the reading rooms or classrooms, they seemed curious about what was happening inside the rooms, and looked into all four of the glass doors that are off the gallery. For the second and third day of observations, a new data collection initiative was added to the Suma interface to log any further individuals who looked into the classroom and reading room spaces.

## Appendix A: Suma activities

Activities: read signage

Activities: look at signage

Activities: pass through (no other activity)

Activities: sit

Activities: watch the films

Activities: enter class/reading rooms

Activities: look in classroom

No Activity: No Activity