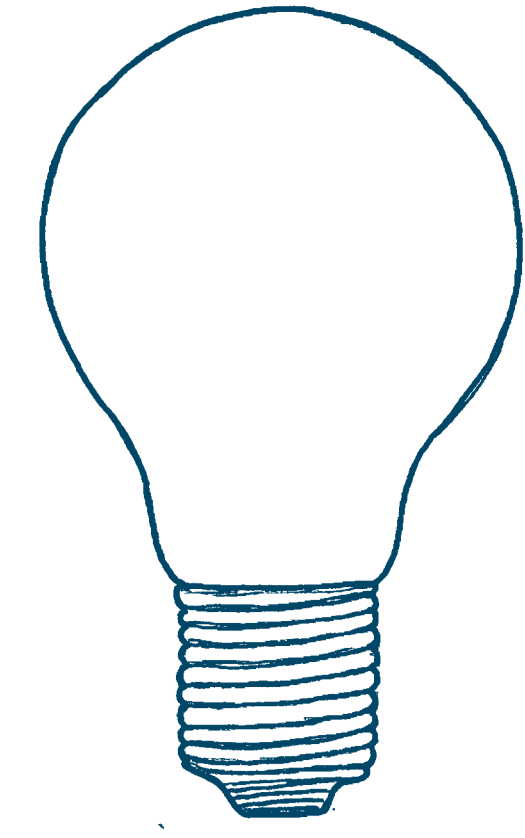


Tell Me About the Library of Your Dreams

Community Art for Learning User Needs

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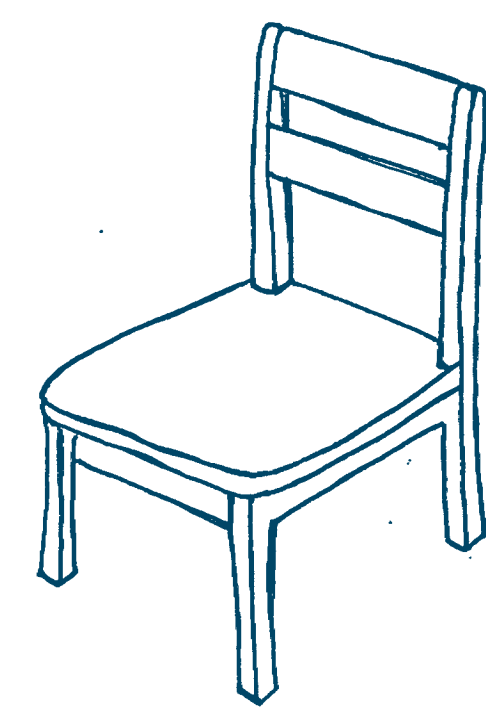
INTRODUCTION

User needs assessment is time consuming and can be difficult to approach for many of us who lack specific training and expertise in the work. While libraries have many

quantitative methods for understanding our users, getting at our communities' thoughts and desires is always a challenge. In a time of great change in how our communities access and think about information, figuring out both the big and little things that are on folks' minds can help us advocate for the futures of our institutions.

“Giving people an image or object to talk about sparks multiple reactions, leading often to outpourings of all kinds of information, feelings, thoughts, and situation details.”

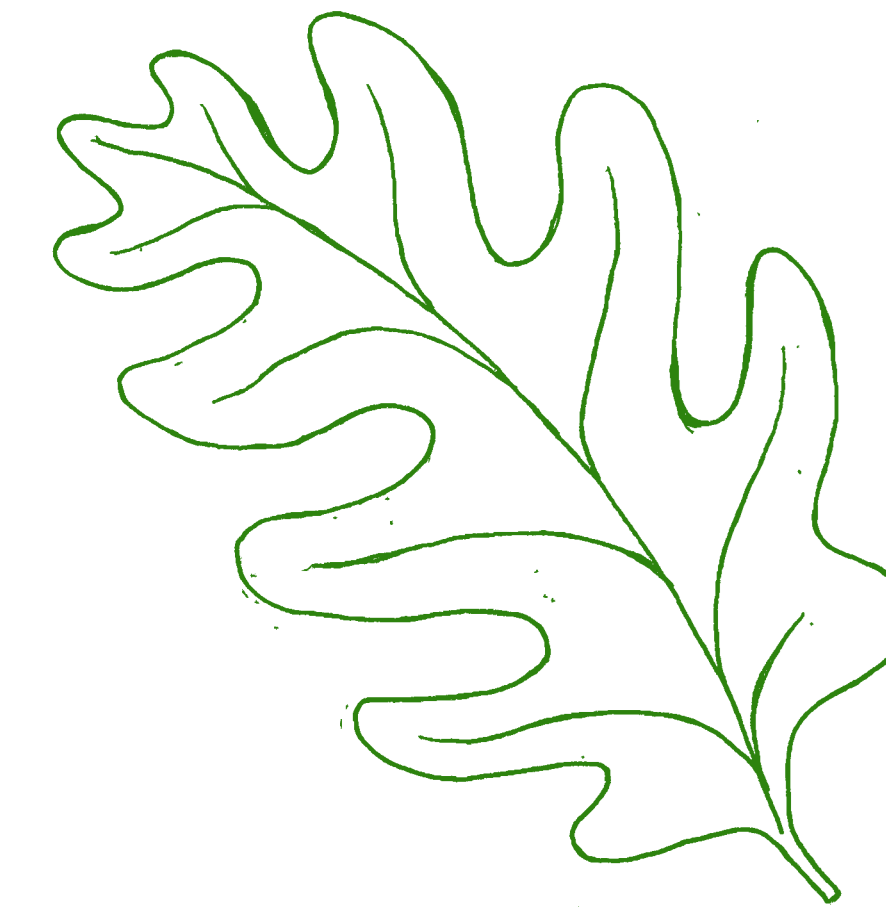
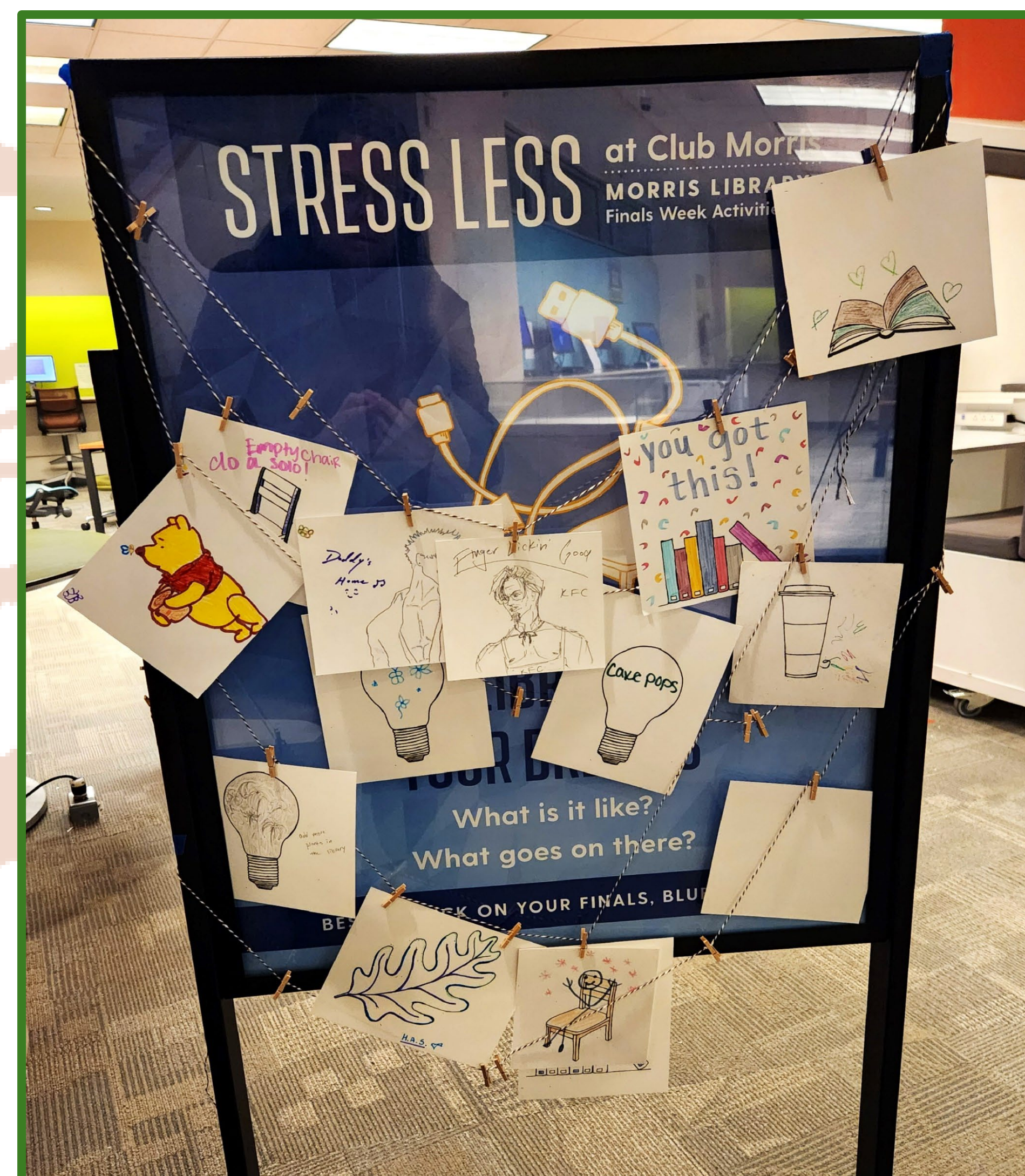
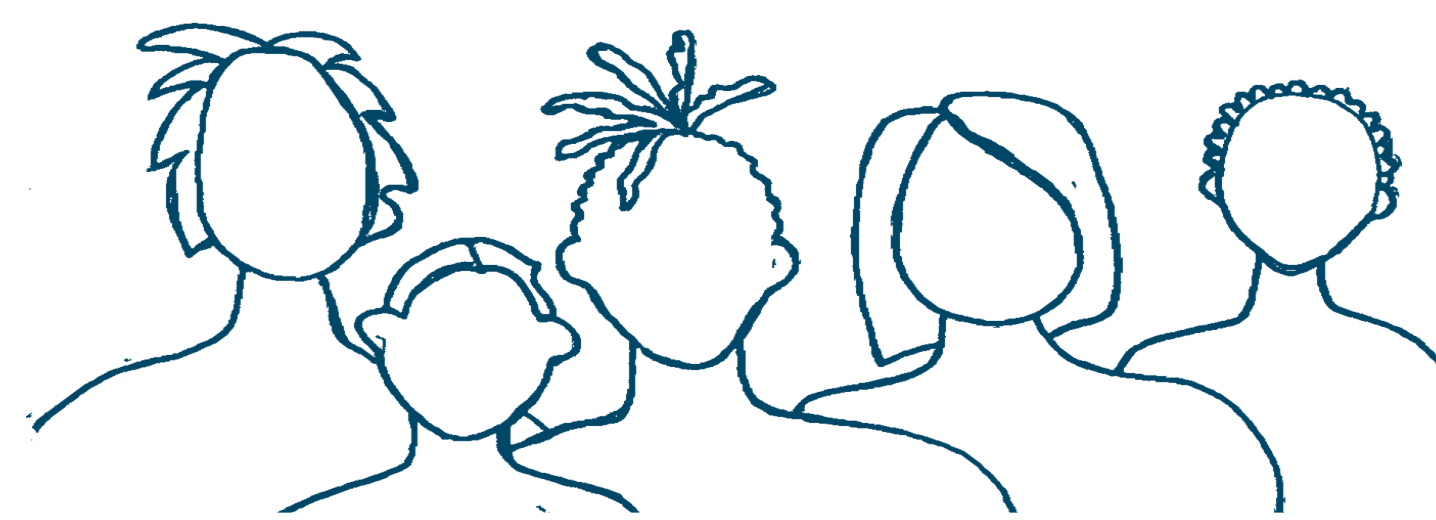
Participatory or Community based art projects have long been used to understand the priorities, needs, and perceptions of a community. Within the context of an academic library, community art projects can foster a sense of engagement and send a strong message that participants' thoughts, ideas, and feelings matter. By providing a prompt in the form of a question, and scaffolds for expression in the form of images that can be colored, drawn, written upon, a safe, inclusive, and fun space can be provided for sharing thoughts, ideas, suggestions, feelings about the library, and how the community uses and interacts with it.



The QUESTION

If asked to contemplate the qualities, features, activities and general “vibe” of a library of their dreams (not bounded by the actual institution they have access to), what would students share that could inform our library spaces, services, and programming?

WHAT COULD WE LEARN ABOUT OUR STUDENTS' CONCEPT(S) OF A LIBRARY?



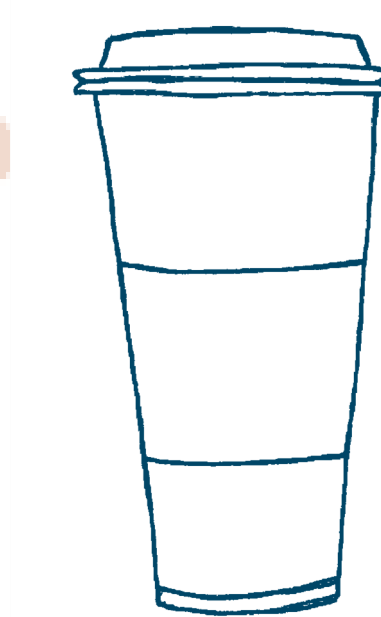
METHODS & LIMITATIONS

Research was undertaken at the University of Delaware's Morris Library with the obvious limitation that students who do not use

the library were not reached.

- Research employed a **draw and write** technique and **inductive thematic analysis**
- 8 images prepared and printed on card stock
- Colored pens and pencils provided along with candy as a small incentive
- 40 images were drawn and written upon by students.

Use the QR code to access a gallery of student images.



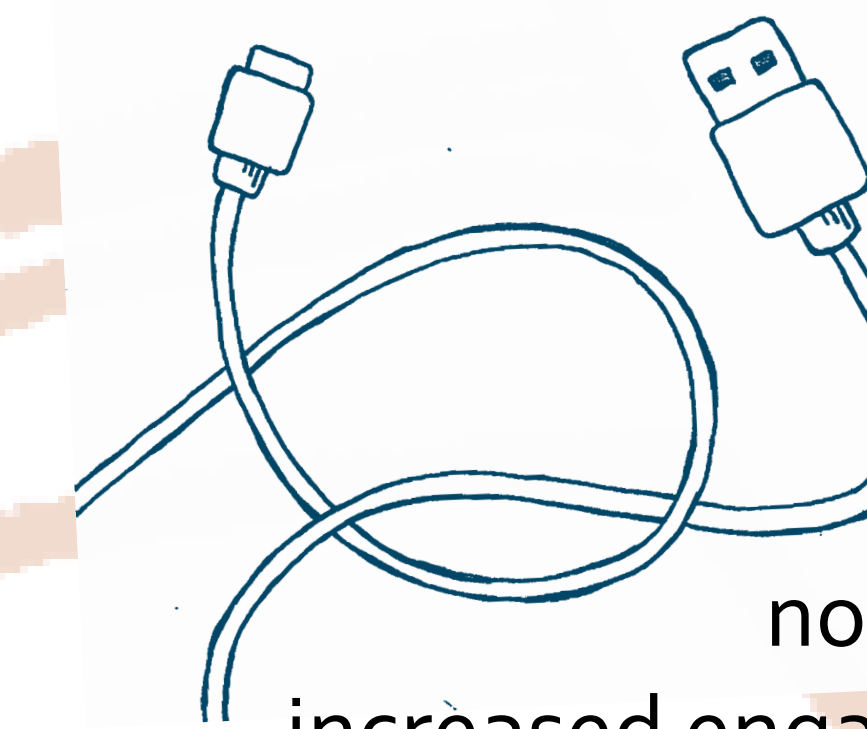
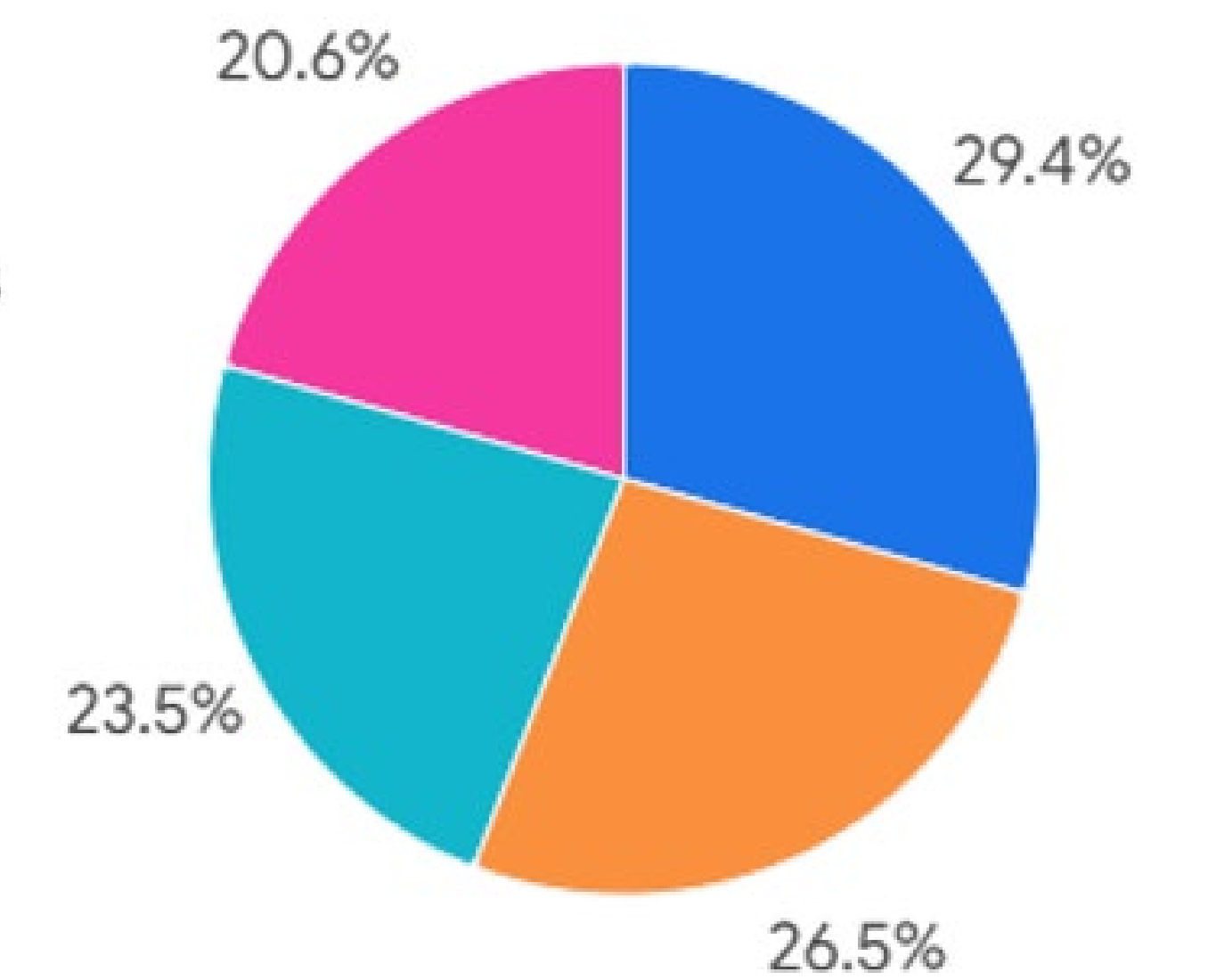
RESULTS

Inductive thematic analysis yielded the following top and sub themes:

- **Library as place**
 - Seating options
 - Natural light
 - Plants
 - “Coziness”
 - Coffee/Café/Food options
- **Library as intellectual hub**
 - A place for exploration
 - A safe place for expression, and asking questions
 - Options for community programming and learning (book clubs etc.)
- **Library as resource**
 - Requests for specific categories of books
 - Community representation (in collections)
 - Staff support

The images chosen also yield information about how students think about the library: they reflect the themes found in the text analysis with a priority on **library as place** and the **library as an intellectual hub**.

- books
- chairs
- lightbulbs
- other



DISCUSSION

Students were intrigued when told this was a research project and the novelty of the methodology increased engagement. While the results are not terribly surprising – the library is the main study spot on campus so the emphasis on a comfortable space is understandable- they do yield actionable results. **In particular**, we will be discussing our programming as student desires for community engaged learning outside of disciplinary structures were clear (book clubs, discussion groups). Because it is so open ended, the draw and write technique paired with inductive thematic analysis helps mitigate researcher bias as there are no survey or interview questions that, unless expertly designed, will have assumptions embedded in them. This is a simple, scalable, and engaging methodology for feeling out your students' vibes about your library and what they would like to experience there, unbounded by your ideas of what they need.

REFERENCES

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