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Tolerance of Noise in the University Library

Harold Ogden  
Hammaad Subhani  
Lydia Schreier  
Marie DeYoung  
Saint Mary’s University

ABSTRACT
In modern civilization, noise has become a problem in many situations. Traffic noise has been seen to reduce level of health and quality of life (Dratva et. al. 2010). Background noise has been seen to reduce learning ability (Lukits 2012). Even at low levels, noise has been identified as a source of distraction, irritation and low productivity (HR Focus 2006). This study examined the degree to which various sources of noise are a problem to university library users.

Preliminary exploratory investigation was conducted with secondary research, as well as informal consultation with library staff, informal discussion with undergraduate classes and first-hand, unstructured observation in the library. With the information gained, a paper questionnaire was constructed consisting of fourteen items representing various sources of noise which were rated on seven-point scales ranging from 1 for least problematic to 7 for most problematic. These were self-completed by 199 library users in various parts of the library over a period of three days at various times of those days.

An overall average of the rating was calculated and then the average of the rating from each source was compared with t-tests. Greater tolerance than average was seen for noises that were part of the normal operation of the library. Lower tolerance was seen for sources which were not part of normal operation such as construction, student socializing and cell phones. Interestingly, noises associated with cell phone use, both the ringing of the devices and the talking into them, were less tolerated than average. Also, the level of tolerance of these noises decreased with age of respondent.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Harold Ogden is Associate Professor in the Department of Marketing Department, Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and can be reached at Harold.Ogden@smu.ca.
Hammaad Subhani and Lydia Schreier were MBA students at the Sobey School.
Marie DeYoung is the University Librarian at Saint Mary’s University.

REFERENCES
