

# **Expected usage and perceived usage, photography as a methodological tool: the case of a learning centre in France.**

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## **Abstract**

Photography beyond simple proof, became full research material (Bateson & Mead, 1942). It remains less investigated as a methodology in information and Communication Science (SIC) and particularly for the study of library use. However, the photography is a method of gathering information on the lived space that involves elements that tend to complicate the analysis. Therefore we can ask if photography is a medium, in the sense of support, of scientific data collection (Tardy, 2007), if it allows us to account, to signify the semiotic meaning (Barthes, 1980), of the actors expression.

Our paper proposes to think on this methodological tool for data collection. It is based on a study of the "learnings centers" in France. This study analyzes the use of these new models of libraries in connection with the enunciation proposed by these devices as a "work of reconciliation and confrontation of saying pictures" (Bonaccorsi, 2013). A focus on the occupation of spaces and movement of professionals and users will realize the trace of uses and intentions. The collected data furnish "a space waiting for configuration of the pictures by researcher [...] ephemeral support work and always in change [...] that offer an instrument for reflexivity [...] by linking meaningful shapes to practice who gives them status and quality" (Bonaccorsi, 2013). Face to methodological difficulties in use observation, photography can indeed be a means of investigation that serves two objectives - one on the variety of tools for collecting traces and another on taking into account different representations. The sensitive approach to qualitative methods that we specify gradually, built the empirical receptivity of the

researcher involved in the process of "significance" (Leleu - Merviel, 2008).

**Keywords:** photography, documentary space, learning centre, qualitative method

## **Introduction and key question**

Beyond providing a simple visual record, photography has become research material in its own right. Yet, it remains little investigated as a methodology in the Information and Communication Sciences (ICS) particularly in the study of library usage. Indeed, the use of libraries or documentation centres is evolving in line with changes in the ease of access to information and the forms of mediation seeking to adapt to these changes in order to meet new needs. But, perhaps paradoxically, this adjustment to needs is not straightforward as it is not easy to record the changes in usage which are often merely representations or projections. However, although photography constitutes a method for collecting information on space as it is experienced, bringing complex elements into play, it may be questioned whether photography, a record of scientific data (Tardy, 2007), allows us to demonstrate, to signify in the semeiological sense (Barthes, 1980), the expression of the actors.

The changes occurring in libraries and documentation centres are beginning to be implemented along the lines of the « learning centre » concept (Jouguelet 2009, Maury, 2011). This puts the focus on learning thereby seeking to realign library services, traditionally based on accessing information, towards offering learning support through a critical approach to knowledge reception and acquisition. Whereas these developments in library usage appear to be confirmed by different studies, there is still a lot to be done to clarify the way in which users in schools and universities occupy these spaces. No longer solely dedicated to storing, in particular, scientific and technical information, libraries have become learning and living environments in which information, at least in a physical or paper format, does not necessarily take centre stage.

Our paper proposes a reflection on this methodological data collection tool based on an exploratory study of

“learning centres” in France. Our aim is to analyse the usage of these new library models in connection with what these systems enunciate, by working on “relating and confronting images” (Bonaccorsi, 2013). By focusing on the occupation of the spaces and how the users and staff circulate within them, it will be possible to chart their usage and intentions. The data collected in this way constitutes “a space waiting for the researcher to configure it through images [...] an ephemeral support to work with, constantly evolving [...] which provides a tool for reflexivity [...] relating signifying forms to practice which gives them status and quality” (Bonaccorsi, 2013). Faced with the methodological difficulties of observing usage, photography may indeed constitute a means of investigation that serves two purposes – the purpose of varying the tools used for collecting evidence and that of considering representations in a different way. The sensory approach to the qualitative methods that we gradually specify, builds the empiric receptivity of the researcher who participates in the process of “signification” (Leleu-Merviel, Useille, 2008).

How can photography contribute to gathering data on the link between the expected and perceived usage of a particular learning centre organisation?

What are the new uses anticipated by the professionals orienting this new organization? Which features are emphasized? What new relationships to information and to documents are emerging from these foreseen uses?

We present, firstly, our theoretical approach concerning photography as a sensory approach to representations, secondly the use made of the spaces and finally the links between information and learning. Based on these theoretical choices, we present the methodology used to set up a system of data collection and subsequently present some of the results which we analyse and discuss in the third section.

## Theoretical approach

### *The sensory approach and use of images*

The sensory approach refers to the question of sense. “Sense” designates both the faculty to perceive the impressions made by objects and each receptor system that makes perception and sensation possible. It involves the relationship between the perceptible object, which evokes an alternative reality to itself (a sign), and what it refers to. According to The Historical Dictionary of the French Language, “sense” is derived from “*sensible*” which describes in particular that which can be perceived by the senses. The adjective acquired a passive value in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it meant “clear, obvious”. Sensory realities in Aristotle’s philosophy designate the qualities that can be or seem to be perceptible to one or more of the senses. In general usage sensitive and sensory may be synonymous. “Sensitivity” designates, in particular, the quality of being sensitive to something. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the word designated the quality of feeling and conveying emotions,

then later came to denote a character capable of producing a sensation. “Sensory” concerns sensation, the action of perceiving, of feeling, of understanding.

Photography is not only a specific act between an observer and the object photographed, it is an intermediary record which can be used to elaborate scientific material. In this respect, it is similar to the interview technique which is a reasoned process leading to the construction of representations. Photography is a tool, like any other, which portrays reality as it is captured by an observer. It cannot be reduced to a creative act or to a support more subjective than any other collection of data (Tardy, 2012). It allows us to record what is real and can supplement a data collection method such as the interview. “This method provides a way in which the interview can move from the concrete (as represented by the literal objects in the image) to the socially abstract (what the objects in the photograph mean to the individual being interviewed)” (Briden, 2007).

Photography can also be considered alongside drawings done pre or post interview. The shift to a graphic portrayal, understood as with photography as the sensory approach from the actors’ point of view (Fabre, Veyrac, 2008), gives the interviewees the opportunity to bring their representations to light in a different way. This includes capturing the complexity of a system through a collection of representations then using it to analyse the library spaces and the usage expected of them.

### *Space and how it is used*

Space implies a passage between an exterior and an interior. We do not penetrate a heterotopia (Foucault, 1967) by chance. We enter it by way of a material or symbolic area which marks the space as being “different” in that it is separate from the common space. Within it, we gain access to a different area where we can experience something. It is in this other location offered by the library space, that the user will occupy this freedom zone. The user acts differently depending on how he experiences the space, between wanting to use it and constraint.

The library space can also be considered as a potential space linking transitional objects. Between harmony and illusion, the library space, thought out and organized by the practitioner, sometimes goes beyond the simple mediation of documents because it presents itself as a “potential space, a place in which to experience something” (Belin, 2002). For this to happen, the conditions of autonomy have to have been conceived and organized beforehand. The “transitional space” (Winnicott, 1975) is an area which will play an essential role in the processes of representation and symbolization and which will allow an initial step towards independence. The transitional space makes it possible to symbolize the world by distancing oneself from it. It is a halfway zone where a cultural experience can occur.

Thus, the library space, as we have defined it (Fabre, 2012), contains an element of symbolism which places it in

the imagination of those who design it and also of those who “use” it. Considering library space in terms of knowledge mediation confers upon it a role of relay, of intermediary in the same way that considering it in terms of its uses relates it to a process of assimilation and learning. Professionals in the field of information develop the space based on how they predict or presume it will be used. In this sense we can say that it is a space determined by the intentions of its developer, intentions which will be confronted with several ways of doing and experiencing things. It therefore becomes a space determined by multiple attributions which will only be perceived fragmentarily in so far as the intended uses continue to have a strong influence on the designer’s imagination.

In other words, if the documentation centres designed by teacher librarians with the intention of making processed and organized information available, give the impression they are above all else places to access information which, in order to become places “of knowledge” must receive some support to work on assimilating the information, the way students use the library space can orient this vision by transforming the initial intention.

Notwithstanding, the library space can only become a learning space if this transformation is based on a form of mediation which takes into account the actual uses of the space; only then will it be possible to go beyond these uses towards knowledge construction.

### *Information and learning*

The definition of information given by at least some schools of thought in the information and communication sciences, positions it within a process of dissemination-construction of knowledge. In other words, we could say that this process is akin to a process of transmission-acquisition i.e. learning.

The significant proportion of information made available inside and outside the school sphere but that escapes traditional mediation by the teacher, has made it crucial for students to acquire information literacy skills. Indeed, this involves moving from the phase of accessing information to a phase which enables the student to locate, sort, and use effectively the information he needs to learn and therefore build new knowledge. In order to achieve this, there has been a transition from a situation where it was primarily the teacher who mediated the knowledge in the classroom to a situation in which teacher librarians also have this role. This specific mediation, qualified as documentary mediation, has materialised, on the one hand, as an established system (the CDI) which has organized knowledge and made it available in the form of processed and disseminated information and, and on the other hand, in the form of information education or guidance on how to handle information.

In other words, the general question of learning has never been absent either from the design of documentation centres

or from the professional practices of teacher librarians; on the contrary, it has always been central to work on knowledge mediation which requires communicated and communicable knowledge (Meyriat, 1983). That is to say, knowledge mediation includes working with, on and about information.

We are moving, therefore, towards a form of mediation that could be described as a collective form of knowledge mediation. This form of mediation is centered on the question of learning with, on and about information in systems whose denomination has signified, until now, work on information-documentation but that now proposes to include the question of learning more explicitly. This semantic shift could be accepted if, as we see it, learning clearly refers to the transition from an organisation of knowledge to knowledge communicated via information, towards suitable information for constructing new knowledge. Do the current learning centres reflect this collective mediation?

## **Methodological choices and data collection**

### *Description of the context*

This study concerns a secondary school of 300 students and 30 teachers partially assigned to the school. There are 3 first form classes, 3 second form classes, 3 third form classes and 4 fourth form classes. The population has decreased drastically in the surrounding geographical area. Formerly a town centre school, it now has to cater to the needs of students with serious learning difficulties who come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. The teachers have had to change the way they work: to function more as a team to cope with difficult classes, to adapt their teaching methods, to consider how to provide a different kind of support for students. The digital work environment facilitates learning partly by providing the possibility of putting homework exercises on-line, but also by making it possible for students, who have no Internet connection at home, to benefit from supervision and support when they come to work in the CDI.

Following on from this, the « learning centre » spirit has imposed itself almost surreptitiously upon this specific teaching team. Its materialisation was enhanced by the juxtaposition of several rooms: the chief educational adviser’s office which is adjacent to the school administration office, which leads into the CDI, which opens into both the supervised study area and a study room.

It became known as a “Learning centre” after a school inspector’s visit. The inspector made them realize that the development of these spaces and the student guidance methods used within them corresponded to the concept of “Learning centre”; a concept which is defined by the educational support and supervision available to students outside the classroom.

### *The method chosen*

Our protocol is based on a mixed method combining observation on-site by the researcher and four interviews

with the staff concerned with and involved in the « learning-centre » activities (a teacher librarian, a principal educational adviser and two educational assistants).

The observation took place over several days during which the researcher made notes (kept a logbook), took photographs, made recordings and collected graphic depictions. The questions in the interview guide focused on the background to the project, how the actors perceived the project, support for the project, their vision of team work etc. Their representations of the space and its uses were also captured as drawings and photographs portraying the way they viewed this space. We chose to complete the interviews using alternative ways of representing reality because, in other field work, we had already seen the relevance of using drawings and photographs to communicate about usage or about a particular practice. Below is the sketch drawn by the researcher during the on-site observation which we used as a standard for analysing the drawings of the different actors.

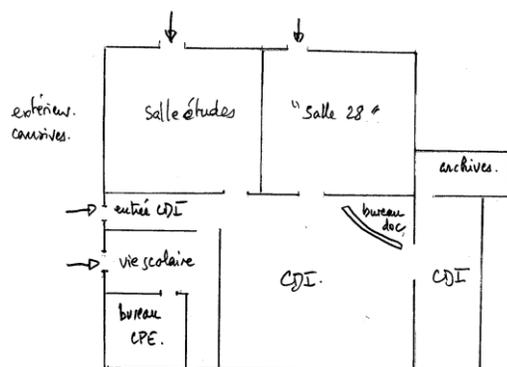


Figure 1: Standard drawing

## Results and analysis

The outcome of the interviews shows the need to qualify the formalization of the “Learning centre” by specifying the context of the project. Thus, the actors describe it as a humble approach to the reflection on a “learning centre” (LC) which resulted from the combination of several factors:

- a profound change in the student population transforming the elitist “town centre” school into a school catering to an increasingly disadvantaged and vulnerable population;

- an outdated documentation and information centre (CDI) in 2005 when the teacher librarian arrived;

- a pre-existing layout making it easier to connect the different rooms. They are all on the same floor, there are no corridors, or schoolyard to cross, just a separating door which made it easier for the students to circulate.

- a desire to work together shared by the teacher librarian and the chief educational adviser

For the principal educational adviser and the teacher librarian, the key words to describe the project are

accommodating students, using the space as a real study area for the students, supervising and offering support to students working individually. For one of them, the specificity of the CDI is that “the different people and work spaces are close together” and for the other “the proximity of the different work spaces” and “the good atmosphere within the team”.

Beyond this initial approach to the LC and its uses, we go on to present the results and our analysis of them focusing on two main aspects; on one hand the relationship between space and the way the staff organise their work and, on the other hand, space in relation to resource materials.

### *Space and the way the staff organise their work*

In order to bring out the salient points, the results are presented thematically and as a collection of verbatim accounts taken from the interviews, drawings and photographs. To distinguish between the different material, we indicate AE1 and AE2 when referring to the accounts given by educational assistants we interviewed, D for the teacher librarian and CPE for the principal educational adviser.

### *Physical and symbolic boundaries*

The first striking feature seems to us to be the delimitation of the spaces and what they symbolise. The project materialised from a rethinking of the enclosed space of the CDI together with the other adjacent enclosed spaces which were trigger components of the new project. This is how the educational assistants describe the boundaries between the spaces:

AE1 : « when the teacher librarian is with a group of students, she takes the first formers for documentation classes, we are in our supervised study period so we close the door and are with our students in the study room, keeping them as quiet as possible and helping them if necessary. So that means they don’t have access to the CDI”.

AE2 : « the door between the school administration office and the CDI is closed when we are discussing things that the students mustn’t hear, we shut the door and open it again automatically afterwards”.

AE2 : « if my colleague is supervising the study period, with a large group of students, if we are in the school administration office and my colleague is having problems handling seventy students or the students are being a real pain, the fact that all these doors are open means we can get up and help her out for ten minutes”.

AE1 : « thanks to this we can hear and see what’s going on... »

AE2 : « all working together... »

In the photograph, one of the assistants has chosen to portray the space by way of the partitions and doors that divide it up.



Figure 2: AE2's photo

View taken from the school administration office, of the open door to the supervised study room through the CDI.

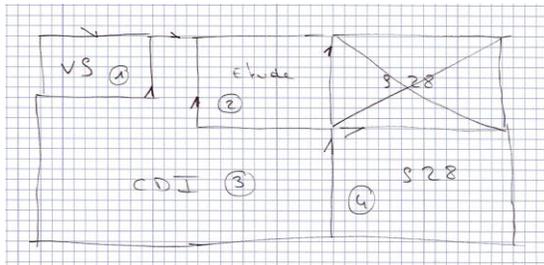


Figure 3: AE2's drawing

In the drawing the educational assistant has clearly indicated the doors between the different spaces with a bold line

The drawings show both the boundaries and how to get from one space to another.

AE2 : "by closing the door we also get a break (sigh) because some weeks are long and occasionally our patience is sorely tested"

The principal educational adviser's drawing seems to go along with this although compared to the very angular depiction shown in the first drawing, she has added a slightly different perspective because the circles soften the boundaries.

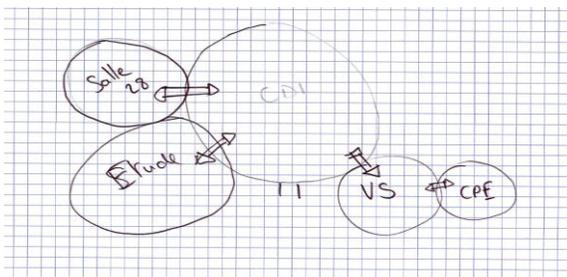


Figure 4: CPE's drawing

CPE : « To draw what the LC represents for me ...I have to split the different spaces up but which in the end ...so here is the CDI [...] room 28 which I use a lot err...here's room 28 which I often use cos thanks to this um, sort of multi purpose room, we have a different space to put students

where we can split up the groups, integrate a class which, like this morning, doesn't have lessons and well, without having to put them in the big supervised study room where we handle the day to day running of things. So, there, the study room, there it is and here's the school admin office and my office, that's the CPE's office, and the school admin office and actually it's that, it's the, the fact that there are doors but that they are never closed. Whereas when I started working here they were shut [...] that's it. So that's really, with the exit here to the schoolyard. [...] this set of doors has really been a fundamental element.

It is surprising to note the perpetual oscillation, in the verbatim accounts, between, on the one hand the desire for a global space without boundaries and on the other the chronic allusion to the different areas using the name of each subspace. This tends to divide rather than unify the space; just as if each actor were subconsciously seeking to conserve the specificities linked to his role within this shared space. For example, the denomination "Room 28" thus, remains, in some respect, both inside and outside the LC project. We find here the heterotopia developed by Foucault which locates spatial boundaries inside a collective imagination.

*Circulation*

The second striking feature in the results concerns the circulation of students (especially between the areas called the "documentation centre", the "supervised study room", and the "school administration office") during a supervised study activity, which is generally considered to be difficult to manage in schools. We can see here that this problem is tackled in such a way that it becomes a crucial factor for developing the spaces in relation to student support.

AE1 : « As soon as the students arrive for supervised study we tell them the CDI is closed for the hour. So, they know that they will have to work with our support as they won't have access to the books or the computers in the CDI".

AE2 : « There is another thing we haven't mentioned, that is, thanks to this room (room 28), with the sliding door, if we stand up between the two spaces (study area and room 28), we can handle more students: once because a teacher was absent, the supervised study room was full, we sent some students to the CDI and we put a whole class in room 28, next door".



Figure 5: D's photo  
Room 28, adaptable as required

The photo taken by the teacher librarian shows how the modularity has allowed them to open up the space to accommodate the activity.

AE1 : « the three doors were open and there were students everywhere. The CPE, our immediate superior, was close by. If we find ourselves in a particularly delicate situation with a student, she'll help us out with the punishments or just with the discussion if we are having a hard time.

Managing the flow of students within the different areas relates here to the notion of transitional space but also to potential space. Indeed, the actors seek access to a new potential space by denying the boundaries and creating signifying routes to it.

### *Space utilisation*

Student utilisation of the space and the uses anticipated by the staff, seem, indeed, to be strongly linked here to the question of learning even though we can observe that what is targeted is more a form of peer-to-peer collaborative learning.

AE1 : « Very often we are both supervising study periods »  
AE2 «we often go into the CDI, we do the rounds. Sometimes we leave them to get on with it and we do our best to answer their questions.



Figure 6: AE1's photo

In the photo, her colleague is helping a group of students with their homework.

Nevertheless the photo chosen by AE1 shows the adult is present in a supporting role which contributes to the goal of learning in this space. The educational assistants recognize that their role is to supervise and offer support to the students.

AE2 : « it can happen that we are not really free sometimes. My colleague will try to do what she can or she'll ask a good student if he thinks he can explain the notion to his classmate. In fact, sometimes we even prefer it if they explain things to each other [...] they go over it together in their own words. This introduces them to peer support, rather than always asking an adult, the information is on hand just next to them, whereas we would have to look through the whole lesson to be able to help”.

From the staff's point of view, if the LC provides learning support, it seems also to be developing towards a system of peer-to-peer learning as we can see in the following extracts.

AE1 : We use room 28 whenever we can when there are a lot of students in supervised study because during these periods, the tables are organized so that they can work together, and we can see them. However, this means we lose a fair bit of space and capacity so this room is really useful”.



Figure 7: D's photo

Some of the students in the same class have chosen to leave the supervised study area and work in a small group in the CDI.

The photo taken by the teacher librarian shows how she really wants to develop the CDI into a work space.

AE2 : « some students really like coming to work in the CDI. They bring their maths, they do their homework”.

The teacher librarian's choice of photo does not highlight the use of the resources or documentation in the CDI but seems to relate to the students' autonomy both in terms of how they choose to use this space and the work they do in it.

### *Space and documentation*

#### *Spaces and sub-spaces*

The function of each subspace, particularly those which are dedicated to storing documents, is not referred to at all in the drawings with the exception of the “reading” area shown by AE1. During the interviews, AE2 points out that : “We have the key to get into the storeroom, if we need three history or four science textbooks we can go and get them from the storeroom if they are available”.

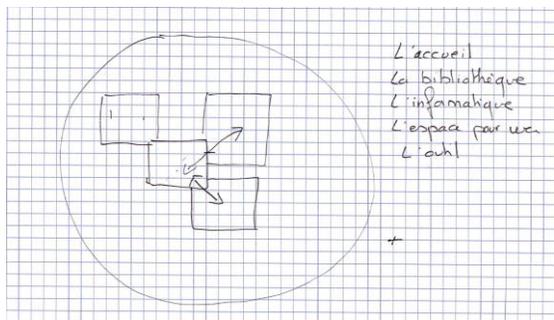


Figure 8: The teacher librarian's drawing.

Paradoxically, it's the teacher librarian who has drawn the most minimalist sketch of the different spaces which make up, what she continues to call, the "CDI », but next to it, she does choose to list some key words which characterise the system. The drawing shows a juxtaposition of the subspaces but does not really indicate how to circulate between them. This said, the fact that there is a circle encompassing the subspaces, reinforces the idea of a desire for globality which is not always satisfied when we refer to the subspaces in detail.

In the CPE's account, we note that she specifies the spaces and their uses in terms of the different roles played by the teacher librarian: "It was my job to say to the educational assistants: remember that Katia is also a teacher so when she tells you that the CDI is closed, well she needs to focus on her class, on the lesson, that's the way it is. I had to get them to take that on board. She's too busy to worry about book loans, so, we can do it, discreetly, we can go in, we can provide this service but that's where we must be wary because it's at these times she's at her most vulnerable, so to speak, because we might be interrupting her in the middle of her lesson plan and put her in a difficult position. She's already managed to explain that and it's up to us to be wary of this. I'm not saying that there won't be times when we slip up, as educational supervisors we have our flaws, OK, but straight away one of us should speak up and say be careful. And it was the same thing for the teachers".

The permeability of the subspaces is limited according to the tasks the staff carry out in them and not according to student usage. In this way the teaching function is partially sanctified to the detriment of a desired utilization.

### *Use of documents*

The development of this school into an LC incorporating the CDI, seems to be leading towards a different relationship to the use of documentary resources within the subspaces, which is also influencing the mediations at work.

AE2 : « it's great that we can help them consider other options when they are looking for information. We tell them, for example, no you won't find exactly what you're looking for on Internet, look in the library's journals section, you'll find the answer in one of the magazines there".

AE1 : « we ask them if they have work to do on documentation so we can then send them to the CDI, they have access to the computers, to the books and afterwards we are there to help them with their information search, just like the teacher librarian ».

What AE1 says here is reflected in her drawings and photographs, in which we find the most significant presence of material resources. They are present both in the subspaces, like the reading area, and in the storeroom where the textbooks and archives are kept. They also appear in the foreground of the photo of the lending service which, taken from this angle, puts the viewer in the teacher librarian's "entrenched" position behind the service desk, discussing a certain document with a student.

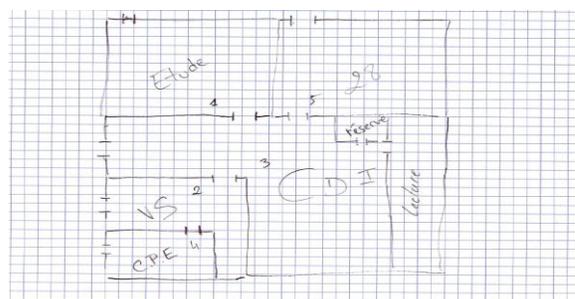


Figure 9: AE1's drawing



Figure 10: AE1's photo

In the photo, documents are present on the shelves. In the background we can see a row of computers with two students working on them. So, although the material resources are only vaguely referred to in one part of the verbatim accounts and only slightly prominent in the pictures, they do, reappear in the description of how the spaces are used.

### *Presence/absence of the documents*

Certain elements shown in the photos and drawings are clues to the uses perceived by the staff like the presence or absence of documents, computers, the students' personal resources and the documents used by staff.

Here is a photo of one of the educational assistants' work stations. We can see her coat, the attendance register, the computer connected to the school's network. On the right, printed charts are posted on a cork notice board.



Figure 11: AE2's photo  
the educational assistant's desk when she is supervising  
in the study room.

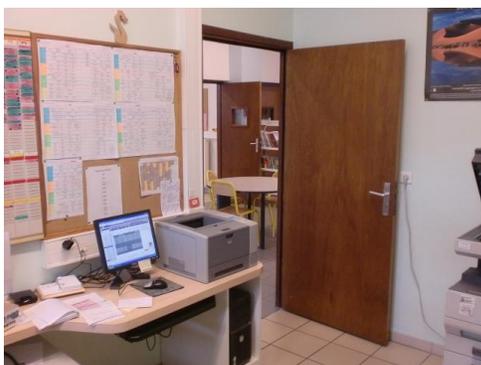


Figure 12: D's photo taken from the school  
administration office.

In this photo, taken by the teacher librarian, we can see the computer workstation connected to a printer. On the right we can just make out the photocopier. All this material is reserved for staff use only. Only those students who ask for or who really need one can get a photocopy which will be made by a member of staff. Has the teacher librarian taken this photograph to illustrate this boundary? It coincides with the following element revealed during the interview:

D : « reflection on the LC means rethinking the space and obviously considering new tools and devices. Those of us

working in documentation are currently asking ourselves : should we equip the CDI with tablets or e-readers? That's the question, that's what we're debating. At the moment we can't agree because these electronic devices are constantly evolving. Should we consider using tools which will soon become obsolete? We also have the problem of Wi-Fi connection and its authorisation in schools. So, now either we dig in our heels and resist or we start seriously thinking about the issue, we're not clear on this".

D : « We already have some on-line lessons. But even on the subject of digital textbooks, there are still some CDIs where it is forbidden to come and work on maths. That should perhaps change. Why ban maths from the CDI? On what grounds? »

D : We open up the digital world to the students but some of them are in difficulty, not all families are equipped so we have to adapt to this. This means we have to stay open longer and find solutions; that has also made us think about things. To start with we said OK but how do we make it work? We put the textbooks on-line, OK....then what? So that's helped, it's helped to encourage the use of new computers in the CDI and during supervised study. Technology mustn't become an obstacle for students".

D : « There is textbook content but it's mainly in maths they work on that. Er ..they give them exercises to do on-line and they get the correction, they know which student is connected, at what time and why. That's how we discovered that some students work during the night. Yes...It sets you thinking when you find out that the students who zone out in class were connected at three in the morning. We had a case recently. Students who don't stop yawning in class but when the maths teacher sees they do their exercises between two and three o'clock in the morning (silence) well you can address the problem face on (laughter). That's how it goes..."

The uses perceived here are related to the learning process-learning support. The absence of documents from the CDI, as seen in the photos and confirmed in the accounts shows that the LC project is adapting to this evolution in usage which highlights the fact that information access is no longer the primary objective of those who use these spaces.

The use of photography and drawing helps qualify the accounts formatted by the formalization of the LC project which the different actors have assimilated as a group, and which resembles the official line. We can work on the assumption that photography could help to bring different representations to the surface and allow the researcher to adopt a sensory approach to both the expected and perceived usage of space, however, one of the flaws in this study is that the interpretation of the pictures is left up to the researcher; the actors were not given the chance to complete what they said initially with a description of the pictures and drawings they did. We do, nonetheless, believe that pooling several

subjectivities, those of the researcher and those of the actors, could provide new opportunities yet to be confirmed.

## Conclusion

Given the difficulty involved in grasping new usages of school libraries, we have suggested using photography as a sensory methodology for perceiving the uses of the redesigned library space. This approach has led us to specify, from a theoretical point of view, how the angle or focus of the picture could offer a sensory means to approaching the developments in progress in the field of documentation. This then led us to explain what these uses of the library space imply and also the relationship between information and learning. Based on these elements, we have tried to address expected and perceived usage of a “Learning centre” in France using an approach involving photography, drawing and recorded interviews with staff members. The results of this study show that despite a desire for unification, the boundaries between the subspaces persist whereas circulation and usage are becoming more fluid. This tends to confirm the potential of an existing yet still transitional space.

Furthermore, the dichotomy between the space as an area for living, working and ultimately learning, seems to take precedence over using the documents related to a library space. This reflects the project signified by a change in denomination shifting from “Information and Documentation Centre” to “Learning Centre”.

Photography as a methodological tool complementary to interviews and drawings has proved its relevance here but would benefit from being associated with the words and images of the students, a perspective which will be further developed in forthcoming research on Learning centres.

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