

**La Trobe University Library
Bundoora Campus**

Report on Seating Survey 2003

Introduction

The first seating survey was undertaken in 1991, and since then, seven surveys have been conducted on Bundoora campus. Since the first survey, two campuses have been closed, and their collections have been moved to Bundoora campus and Level 2 of Bundoora campus has been renovated. The data collected in previous surveys was an important factor in the decision to introduce group seating on level 2 in late 1999 and more group seating was added in 2001. In 2000, the seating survey was expanded to include the use of the computer workstations on level 2. This 2003 survey includes the 20 new computer workstations installed on level 3.

The aims of the 2003 survey were:

1. To determine the demand on the computer workstations on all levels
2. To accurately measure the usage of open study carrels on levels 1 and 3
3. To provide data for forward planning for the allocation of space for specific purposes

The data collected since 1991 will allow us to do some time series analyses, but with the changes in the building, only some of the comparative data can be used.

The changes in the building and the removal of seats have changed the ratio of the number of students per seat, and of course the enrolment is a contributing factor.

Year	2003	2000	1997	1991
Available seating	1159	1244	1366	1451
Student EFTSUs	13978	11991	14480	10,224
Ratio of seats to students	1 : 12	1 : 9.6	1 : 10.5	1 : 7

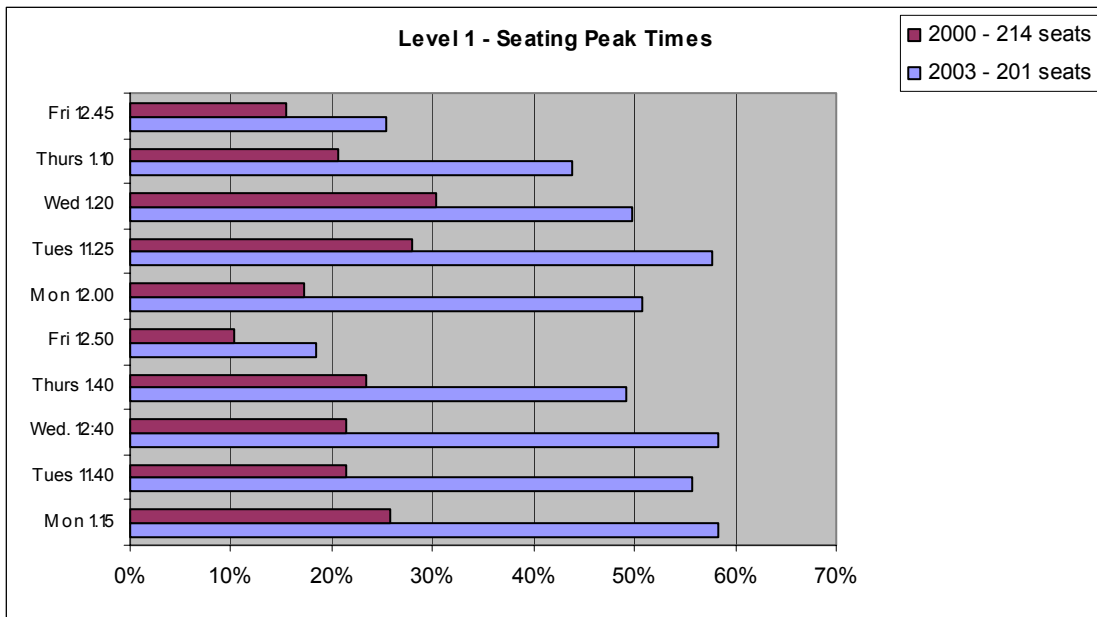
Please note that in 1991 and 1997, the available seating did not include computer workstations. In 2000, the decision was made to include the computer workstations in the seating count because they were considered an intrinsic part of the study space in the library.

Data Collection

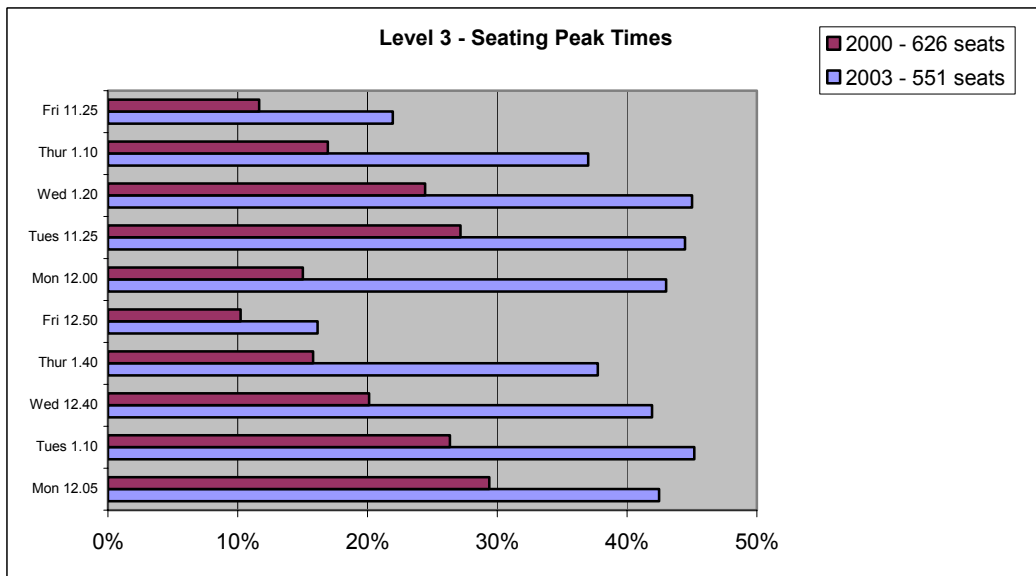
The data was collected over the two week period beginning 19 May until 30 May and the same collections times as in previous surveys were used. As in previous surveys, a total of 59 counts were done. Staff from all the teams in Resource Delivery Services participated in the data collection. The one hour training session established common definitions for the counting and identifying exceptions. The data collection sheets have been grouped by library level and by seating type.

Results

The following charts illustrate the usage of the individual open study carrels on levels 1 and 3 at peak times over the two week period, and as a comparison, the data from 2000 has been added. The first chart shows the higher usage of the study carrels in the Serials and Government Publications areas during peak times in 2003. The 2000 data includes the use of the newspaper tables which were originally in the area; these tables have since been replaced by individual study carrels



The style of the seating on Level 3 has not changed; it is still mainly open study carrels with some lockable carrels, and the two discussions rooms. The following chart illustrates the change in peak usage from 2000 to 2003.

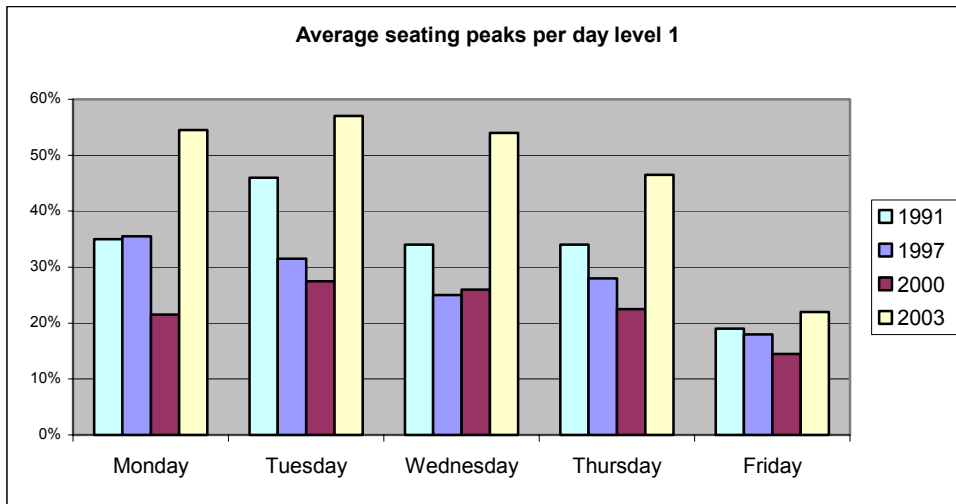


A number of factors have contributed to the significant increase in the peak usage of Levels 1 and 3:

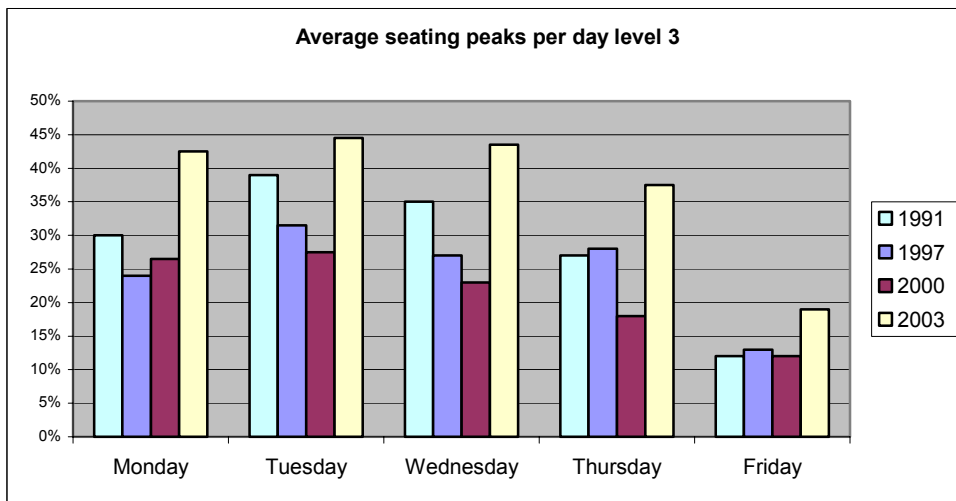
- Increase in shelving with a reduction in the number of seats on Levels 1 and 3
- Change in the style of seating on Level 2, the change from group seating and silent study area to all group seating, effectively reduced the number of study seats overall.
- Changes in the study environment on Level 2 allowing quiet conversation; students who want quiet study are directed to Levels 1 or 3.

Use of seating averaged over the collection period

The previous charts illustrated the peak of seating usage in the library, and comparing this with the data collected in 2000. In the following charts, the use of the facilities was averaged and analysed by day of the week for the whole survey period. The survey results from the 1st survey in 1991 have been included as well as the data collected in 1997, 2000, and 2003. As with the peaks in the seating, the average use of the study space in 2003 has significantly increased. In the analysis for the following two charts, the percentages occupied during peak times on each of the weekdays were taken; for example the two Mondays, Tuesdays, etc. of the survey period, were averaged across both days of the week.

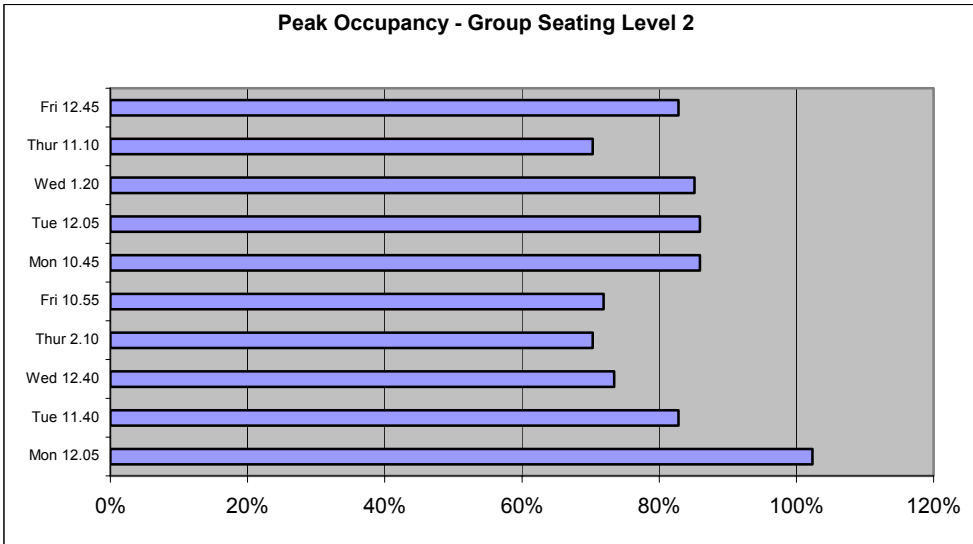


A comparison of the average usage by day, with the peak usage still shows a significant increase in the use of the library on Level 1. One interpretation of this data would be that library users on Level 1 are using the print journal collection more than in previous years. The collection of e-journals has not replaced the use of the print collection.



This chart demonstrates that there is still a need for quiet study space in the building. In any future space planning, inclusion of quiet individual study area is essential.

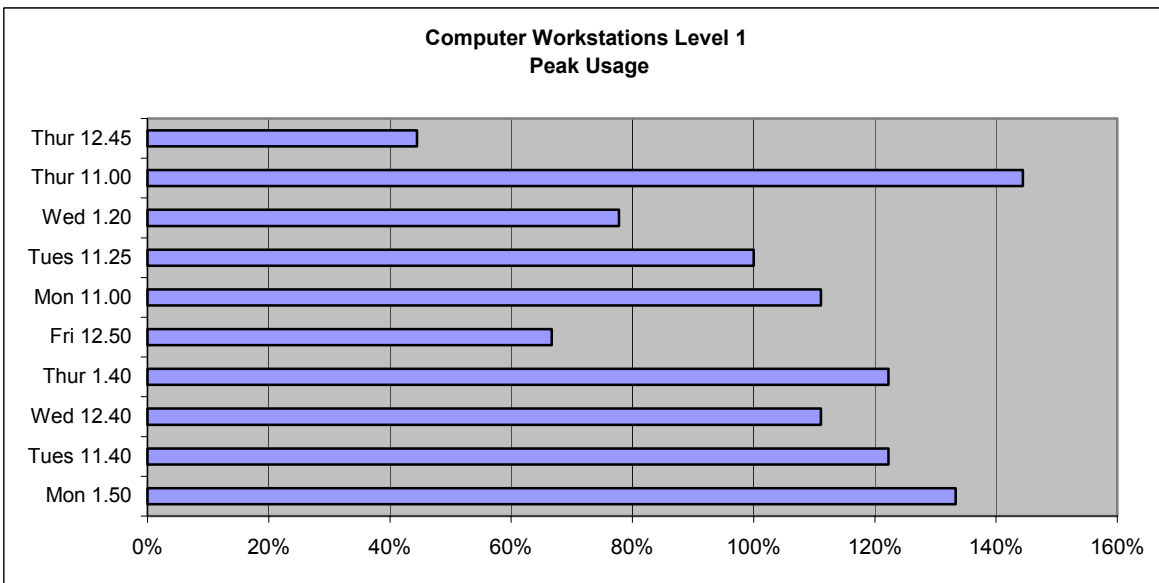
The group study area on Level two was a difficult area to measure because the students move the chairs and the tables around. The group study area has always been very popular and our survey demonstrates this. In 2001, the individual study carrels were removed from Level 2 and the group study area was extended and the library currently has seating for 128 individuals in the group study area.



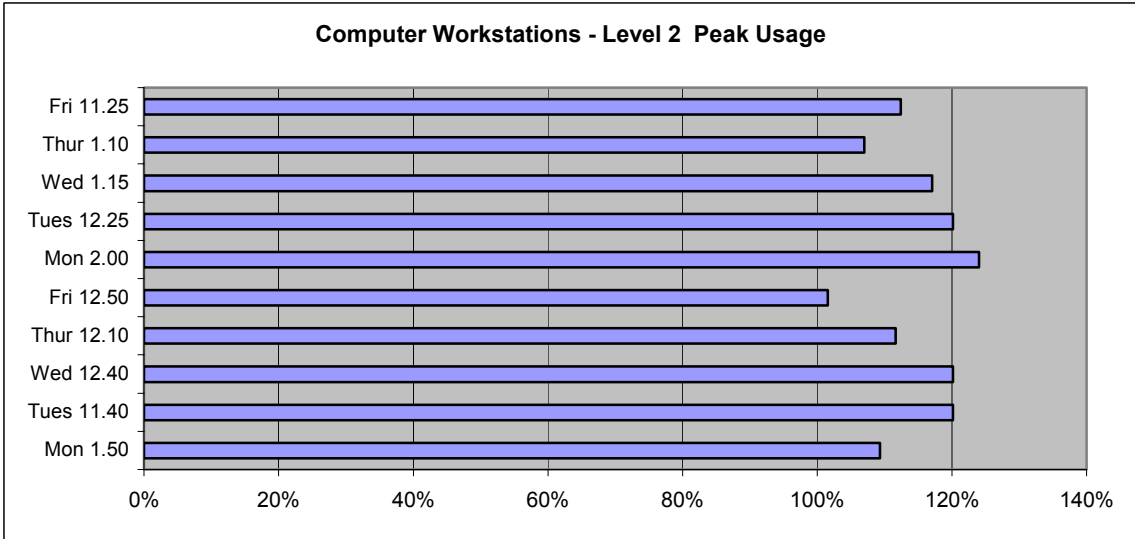
Computer workstation usage

The usage of the computer workstations has been analysed by their location, with specific times measuring over 100% usage. As part of the measurement, the number of users in the queues were counted to give an indication of the over usage. It should be noted that the survey was done after the 20 additional workstations were installed on Level 3.

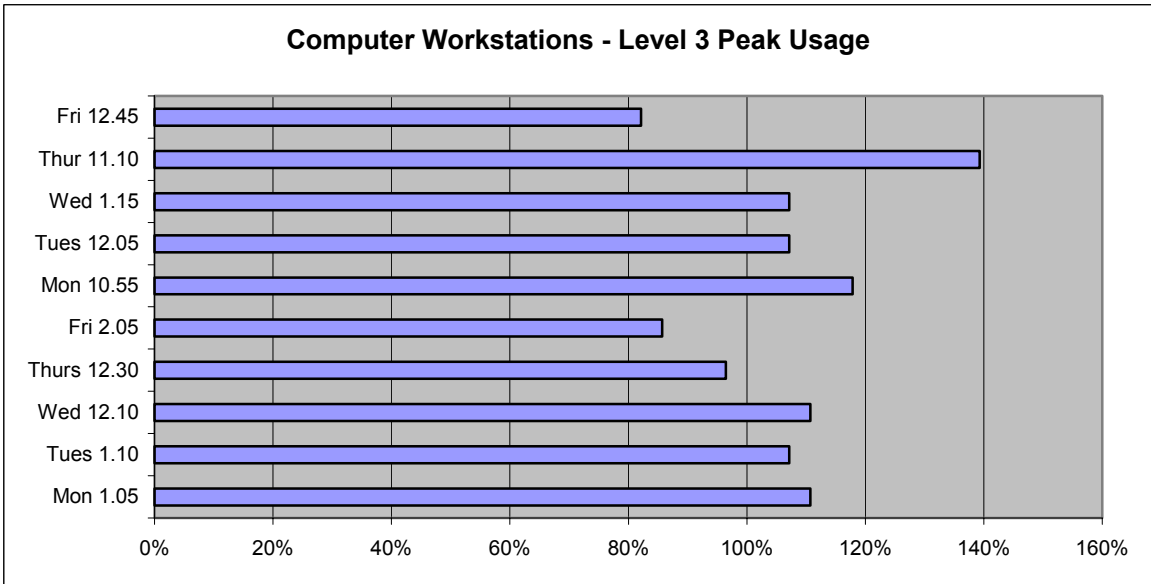
The first chart measures the use of the 9 workstations on Level 1, near the serials collection:



The workstations on Level 2 include the large bank of workstations in the Reference area as well as the workstations in the Audiovisual area. This does not include the workstations in Training Room 2b because the room was not consistently open. A total of 129 computer workstations were included in the survey on Level 2.

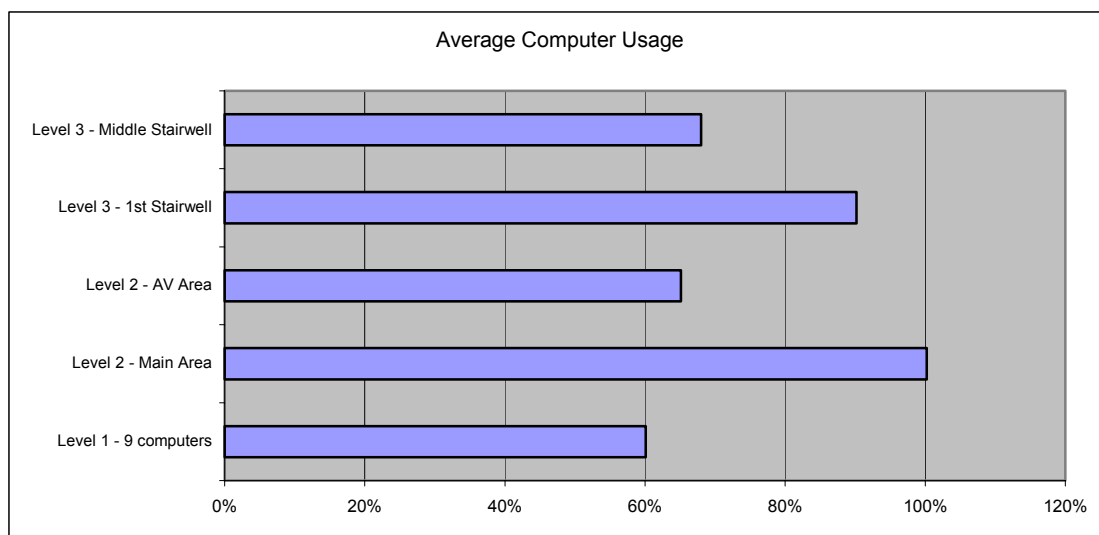


The 20 newly installed workstations on level 3 are also very heavily used. Their installation was completed just before the survey and they were included in the data collection.



On all three levels, the number of computer workstations did not meet demand during the period that the library is at its peak usage.

The average usage was measured over the two week period of the trial, from 9am to 4:30pm from Monday to Friday. The charts below show that even when the early morning usage is included, the use of the workstations is still consistently high. Only on three days of the 10 days that were included in the survey, was the occupancy rate less than 100%.



A total of 59 counts were done over the two week period, and it is interesting to note that even when the total counts are averaged over the period of the survey, the workstations on Level 2 are still 100% occupied.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Since the first survey was done in 1991, all indications consistently point to the library as a focus for study on campus.

1. The data collected over the period of the survey show that the library's general seating meets the needs of the University community:
 - The open study carrels on Level 3 were consistently below 50% occupied during the survey.
 - On Level 1, occupancy rate peaked at 58%. Any reduction in seating on this level may cause problems and will need careful consideration.

2. One area which is under pressure is the group seating on Level 2. The data shows that during the busiest period, the group seating area was between 70-100% full. This is a reflection of the changing study behaviour. It appears that group project work is the preferred format for students.
 - It is not possible to extend the group study area on Level 2 without impacting on collection space and other service areas.
 - The only other option is Level 3 but changing to a group study environment will bring noise and other problems to a relatively quiet area.

3. The survey has shown that the computer workstations are 'overused', and this is an issue that should be addressed. For the library, it is important to include this as part of the strategic planning for 2004-2005. Library clientele have already indicated that they are dissatisfied with the queuing during peak times.
 - This may not be simply library issue but may need to be addressed more widely within the University
 - Will wireless technology be an option and a potential solution?
 - In the short term, the management of the existing workstations should be reviewed. Some points to be considered:
 - a. Limiting access during peak times to our students and staff
 - b. Enforcing time limits
 - c. Bookings

The seating survey is an excellent planning tool and the historical data already established is a good base for identifying trends in the use of the library.

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 2 July 2003