

To: ZSR Admin Council
From: Thomas
Subject: Scholars Commons Public Workstations
Date: May 9, 2019

During the Spring 2019 semester, staff and students working in Access Services and RIS gathered usage statistics on public workstations in the Scholars Commons. Once an hour, from 4pm to 10pm, we manually checked how each station was being used (see legend in Chart 1). We had originally hoped to gather usage from two separate weeks, relatively early in the semester and then late in the semester. In the end, we got data from only one week in late February, but it meshes well with our less formal observations, and suggests several changes we should make this summer.

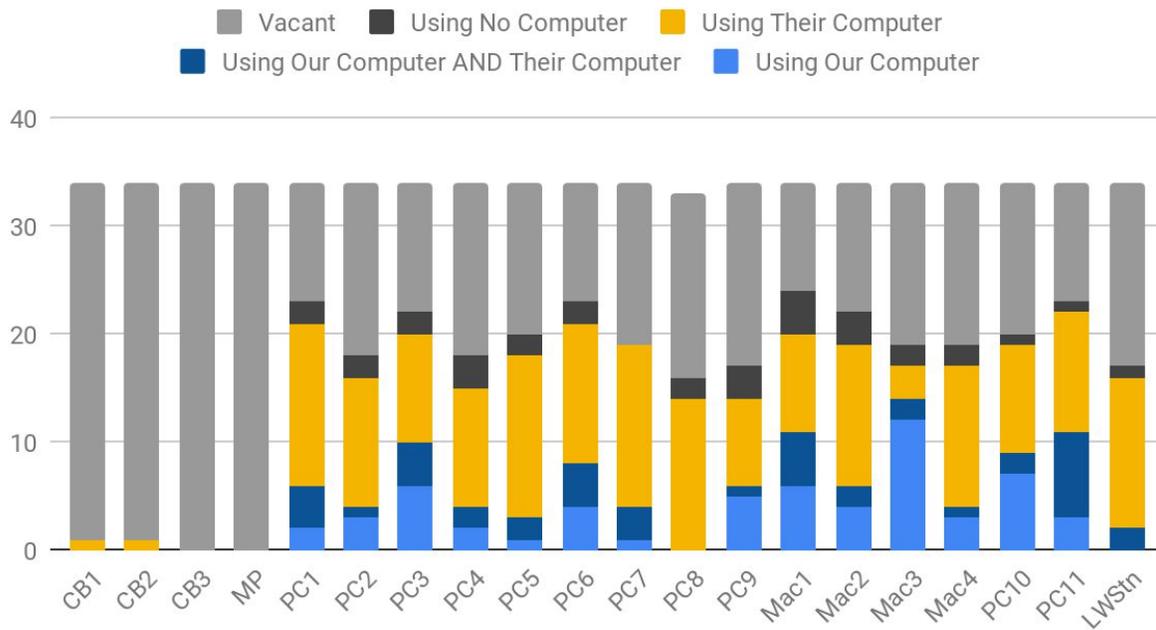
Summary

- We should remove the three Chrome stations and up to three Windows PCs.
- We need to decide what to do with two very high-end workstations that see almost no use.
- We should provide some way for users to move our hardware sufficiently out of the way to use their own laptops without just making a mess.
- We should revisit the idea of an “Instant Workstation” (i.e. a simplified USB-C dock that would connect a user’s laptop to a large, high quality monitor, a full sized keyboard, and a mouse).
- We should more actively communicate to users what our workstation options are.

Here are some quick observations from the statistics gathered.

Chart 1

How Scholars Workstations Get Used



[\[Link to legibly sized chart.\]](#)

The legend reads: light grey, there was no one at the workstation; dark grey, a user was present but not using a computer; yellow, the user was using only their computer; dark blue, the user was using both our computer and their computer; light blue, the user was using only our computer. In other words, **only the blue boxes show any use of our workstations.**

The columns are in order more or less from the Writing Center end of the room to the Auditorium end. Note that the first four columns and the last columns are workstations on high counters. Those four columns show no cases of anyone using just our workstation, and only the last one shows our workstation ever being used along with the user's workstation. The four columns on the left represent our three Chrome OS stations and our Mac Pro; the column at the right end is the high end Lenovo workstation. The other columns are labeled as PC or Mac, showing the workstation we have there.

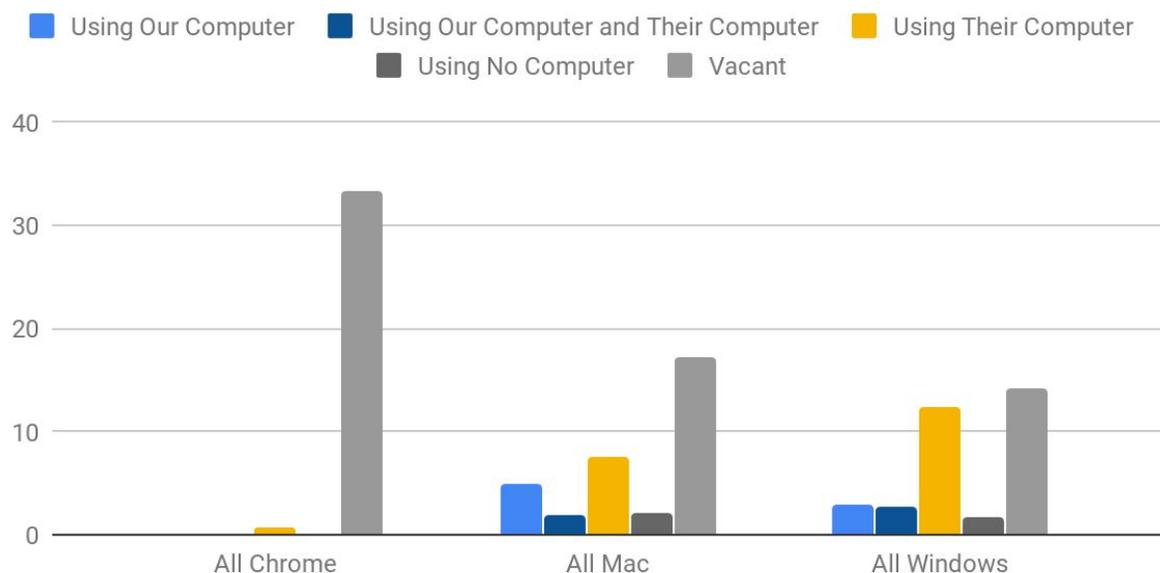
These are five of the six workstations for which we have no observations of our hardware being used by itself.

Note that the Mac Pro and the Lenovo Workstation are substantially more powerful

machines than the other workstations in the room; both also have two very high resolution monitors. These were purchased with the intent to offer an option for students with big data processing, data visualization, or video projects.

Chart 2

Scholars Commons Workstation Usage, by OS (weighted by number of seats)



[\[Link to legibly sized chart.\]](#)

Chart 2 shows the usage recorded, broken down by our workstation OS, weighted for the number of seats we have for that OS (we have more Windows machines than Macs, and more Macs than Chromeboxes).

It is clear from this that the Chromeboxes receive no use, and that the space they take up is not highly valued by users with their own laptops¹.

For both Macs and PCs, the most likely observation, if a user was in that location, was that they were using their laptop and not our workstation.

Macs saw a higher rate of being used on their own; Windows machines saw almost equal

¹ For the first several days of usage stats, this space was curtained off as part of the Dean's List Gala, but it does not seem to make any difference. The high counter at the Writing Center end of the room is the least used space in Scholars Commons.

numbers of people using just our workstation and using both our workstation and their own laptop.

Suggestions

Free up space. The most frequent use of the physical space we devote to public workstations is users using their own laptop. We can encourage this in two ways. First, remove several of the current workstations to free up more open seats in the room. We can remove the three Chromeboxes and perhaps up to three Windows machines. Second, provide a monitor stand with space to stow a keyboard underneath, or some type of rack or stand where our keyboards and mice can sit out of the way. This can minimize the cord clutter and mess that our staff have to straighten up.

Facilitate mixed hardware use. There is also a substantial demand for using our workstation alongside the user's laptop. In addition to users who simply have two computers running, several of us have observed users who actually unplugged monitor cables to connect them to our laptops. While some users may specifically need two computers running simultaneously, for many this use may indicate a need to display their work on large monitors. This suggests that we revisit the "Instant Workstation" idea of a large, high resolution monitor, full size keyboard, and mouse, which can be quickly connected to a user's laptop with one connection. When we first ordered the Scholars Commons hardware in 2016, no single technology could provide this to the majority of our users; today, a USB-C hub can enable this functionality² for all current WakeWare laptops and most models sold in the last several years.

Upgrade remaining Windows machines. When the University moved to a "Bring Your Own Device" policy and officially endorsed student use of Macbooks, we were concerned that we would see many Mac owners with occasional need to use Windows; we met that anticipated need by providing a number of basic (and low cost) Windows PCs.

Add signage. The two most powerful computers in the room are among the least used, and possible changes like the Instant Workstation project will not be intuitively clear to users. We have not used signage in the Scholars Commons, but should consider it going forward. If users do not know what options we offer, we cannot be surprised when they ignore those options.

² A suitable USB-C charger would also allow the user's laptop to charge while docked.