

# In the Hallowed Halls of Academia

Be it research or relaxation, the libraries on campus are always bustling with student activity. Ever wonder where the best place is to catch up on some last-minute cramming, or to just kick back and chill out? Read on ...

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As I sat in the library one September day, the sound of loud music blaring from someone's iPod kept on drawing me away from my books. Common courtesy has always kept me quiet whenever I entered the land of the books—a sort of unspoken library etiquette. Libraries are, after all, a place for quiet study, a place to learn and a place to access resources. But when scores of people gather in a common space—especially in libraries where a calm work environment is expected—actual rules are necessary to ensure that everyone can benefit from that space.

Rather than making me grit my teeth, my noisy neighbour inspired me to go on an investigative journey, visiting the largest libraries on main campus to observe other breaches of etiquette. You see, there are three groupings for noise allowance on campus: the “Common Areas,” which allow conversational noise, because the space is intended for group work; the “Quiet Areas,” where oral communication is limited to whispering; and finally, a few “Silent Areas,” which ask students not to talk at all. Every library indicates very clearly which floor allows for what level of talking. Furthermore, the University's website has a Code of Library Conduct which further outlines the rules. So, keeping in mind that we're all educated and civilized human beings, I set off on my library adventure, spending half an hour during the day and half an hour in the evening.

## Cameron Science and Technology Library

3:45pm. A Tuesday. The 3rd floor. A quiet area. I headed over to some carrels, and just as I sat down, I noticed how *not* quiet this floor was. I was surrounded by group discussions all around me. Three guys were working on a group project to my left, two women, with their books all packed up, sat giggling at the carrels to my right, and at a nearby table, there were some guys sitting around and talking, and they had food and drinks spread out all over the table.

Seriously, I thought, if people want to sit around chatting with friends and having a damn potluck, do they have to do it in the library? Can't they take it downstairs to the CAB cafeteria? Even as I walked around the rest of this floor, I noticed just how noisy it was. I tried sending these people telepathic messages to remind them of the common area on the main floor in Cameron where they could sit and do group work, but that didn't seem to work. A library should not be a gather space for socializing.

My evening visit to Cameron library was at 7:30pm on the same day. Again, I headed up to the 4th floor. Just as I sat down at the carrels, a woman pulled out her cellphone, but luckily, the person she was trying to call wasn't there, so the poor thing had to resort to doing her school work. Boo hoo. For the most part, however, the floor was very quiet that evening.

## Some interesting factoids:

- Cameron Library contains newspapers from the Northwest Territories and Yukon.
- This library also has a huge collection of maps and other cool map-like things (atlases, globes and more).
- A student was stabbed in this library back in 2004. (Talk about breaches of etiquette!)

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## John A Weir Memorial Law Library

Autumn drops beautiful colours around Edmonton, and campus is one place to enjoy the changing leaves. I wanted to enjoy these rich colours on a warm Thursday (7:30pm), so I took the scenic route to the Law Library. Once inside, I headed up to the 3rd floor, and sat down at a table. It was very quiet, although a woman was listening to music a little too loudly on her headphones. Even though she was about 15 feet away, I could hear the faint booming coming from her headset. As if music wasn't enough, she decided that this would be a good time to eat something—carrots. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the sound of this woman's crunching reverberated throughout the quiet library.

Once I was sick of listening to Bugs Bunny's crunching, I decided to take a walk around the floor, and was immediately struck by the amount of food and food-related garbage that was strewn everywhere; I saw pop cans, a Styrofoam container, plastic cutlery and napkins. As I walked past one student, the smell of banana wafted up to my nose.

Being in this particular library, I felt the urge to read a legal document, so I looked up the University's Code of Library Conduct, and found the following quote on the website: “Insects attracted by food and beverages pose a danger to the library collection.” As far as I could tell, the Law Library didn't have any signs asking people not to eat or drink inside, so perhaps the library could put up a sign stating that people who want to eat while studying must bring enough to share with everyone. Even better would be if students did *not* bring food and beverages into the libraries, so as to keep insects away.

Tuesday: 3:20pm. This time, I went to the McLean Reading Room, which is truly the jewel of the entire library.

It was very quiet here, although there was a bit of noise coming from the Law atrium below. There are a couple of nice group work areas at one end of the room. The tables in are really spacious, with hookups for laptops. Some natural light streams down from above, and there's a fluorescent light for each table. Kudos to the person who designed these tables for realizing how important it is for students to have plenty of light.

## An interesting factoid:

- The Special Collections room contains American and English legal works from the 18th century, along with pre-Confederation legal works.

## Rutherford North Humanities and Social Sciences Library

I chose to spend my Thursday, 8:30pm visit on the 3rd floor, a silent area. I was sitting there, enjoying the beautiful peace and quiet, when a cellphone rang somewhere on the other side of the library. The ringing was followed by one of those typical loud, one-sided cellphone conversations that I'm sure everyone wanted to hear. Maybe cellphone users think that they're just so extremely important that they don't need to take their calls outside so that their fellow students can study in peace and quiet. But my tuition rates and I beg to differ; we have come to study, and deserve to have some silence. I really, really, *really* wish that people would turn off their cellphones in the library, or put them on vibrate and take calls outside.

After I spent some time at the carrel, I walked around the library to see if there was any garbage lying around. For the most part, the library was very clean, although I did find two unused packs of 4-square-inch sterile gauze sponges. Is this library a hot spot for practicing med or nursing students? I was a bit confused by my find.

My next visit to Rutherford North was on a Tuesday at 11:15am, and I headed up to the 5th floor carrels overlooking the entrance to both of the Rutherford libraries—a quiet area, and for the most part, it was. When I went for a walk around the library, I spotted a couple staring longingly into one another's eyes. Aw. Ain't that sweet?

After this, I returned to the silent floor and found it to be just that. Well done, 3rd floor inhabitants.

## An interesting factoid:

- The 2nd floor of Rutherford North is the music library. There are tons of resources there, and you can even get information about recitals and concerts put on by University students, choirs and Faculty.

## Rutherford South Humanities and Social Sciences Library

Close your eyes, think about the phrase “the hallowed halls of academia,” and notice the first image that enters your