Trends, Possibilities, and Scenarios for User-Centered Libraries

Susan Gibbons
Yale University, SUSAN.GIBBONS@YALE.EDU
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SUSAN GIBBONS
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN
YALE UNIVERSITY
SUSAN.GIBBONS@YALE.EDU
University of Rochester

Anthropologist in the Library

Work-Practice Methodology

- David Lindahl, Xerox PARC
- Nancy Fried Foster, Anthropologist

2003-04: Faculty work practices
2004-06: Undergraduate students
2006-08: Graduate students (dissertations)
2008-09: How people search (eXtensible Catalog)
2009-10: Science library buildings in digital age
2010-: Undergraduate students
Anthropologist in the Library

Goals
- Real vs. Perceived User Needs
- How can we improve our services, digital presence and physical facilities?
- Adapt to the changing needs of our users
2 Examples

- Undergraduate Students
  - Paper research and writing
- Graduate students
  - Dissertation process
Black Box Question

Improve library support of undergraduates

- What makes an “A” paper?
- What happens between assignment of research paper and completed paper?
Methods

Retrospective Interviews

- Volunteer students
- “Shadowed” throughout semester
- Interviews
End of junior year

- Was interested in the topic
- Professor recommended
- Decided to do senior honors thesis

Early Sep:

- Discussion with Prof. Gersmann
- Proposed a topic
- Applied for funding

Late Sep:

- Submitted proposal
- Starting to write
- Worked on data collection

Oct:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Compiled data

Nov:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted thesis draft

Dec:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

Jan:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

Feb:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

Mar:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

May:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

End of May:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

June:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

July:

- Writing
- Meeting with Prof. Gersmann
- Submitted final draft

August:

- Submitted final draft
- defended thesis
- Graduated
Parent Orientation
• Not a linear process
• Student can’t always recognize where their problem is
Subject Librarians?

- Limited knowledge of role of subject librarian

http://www.flickr.com/photos/carlsonlibrary/sets/72157622006503335/
2 Examples

- Undergraduate Students
  - Paper research and writing
- Graduate students
  - Dissertation process
Dissertation Question

Improve library support of graduate students

- What are the barriers to successful dissertation completion?
Methods

InSitu Interviews

- Show us where and how you work
Significant Disciplinary Differences

- **Sciences** = team member; collaboration; grant-focused
- **Humanities** = lone scholar; isolation; informal support groups
- **Social sciences** = article driven; prior publications “glued” together
Methods

- **Design charrettes**
  - Draw in detail your ideal library space
Design Workshop

- Ideal library space for graduate students
  - No undergraduate students
  - Solitary, but with others
  - Variety of seating/tasks
  - Lots of outlets, good lighting
Selections of Furniture

- “Mature” but not “corporate” or “doctor’s waiting room”
- Interior designer developed
  - Color boards
  - Carpet designs
  - Sample furniture
- Invite graduate students to comment and “vote”
Messinger Graduate Student Study North & South
Desire tool to help with citations

- RefWorks and EndNote

“Right now I am just too busy to do the extra effort to get used to a new system.”

“I’ve never used EndNote or anything like that. Been tempted to learn it but I don’t know, just haven’t had a good opportunity.”
New Understandings

- Barriers to entry need to be lowered
- Blending of academic & social
- Importance of physical spaces
  - Symbolic
  - Neutral
- Tolerance of change
- Embrace experimentation
More information

http://tinyurl.com/2a75pjg

Repository of article, papers and presentations by the River Campus Libraries

**Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester**, published by ACRL, 2008

Available as FREE PDF download, http://hdl.handle.net/1802/7520

**Scholarly Practice, Participatory Design and the eXtensible Catalog**, published by ACRL, 2011